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THE ODYSSEY OF AN
ORCHID HUNTER

THE ODYSSEY OF AN
ORCHID HUNTER

PUBLIC LIBRARY,
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FRED D. BURDETT AT MANILA, WHERE HE STARTED ON HIS FIRST
ORCHID-HUNTING EXPEDITION

THE ODYSSEY OF AN ORCHID HUNTER

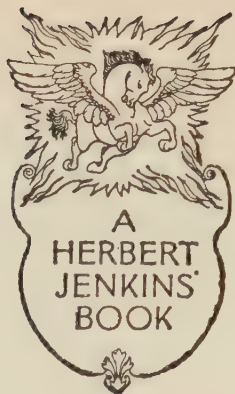
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F. D. BURDETT

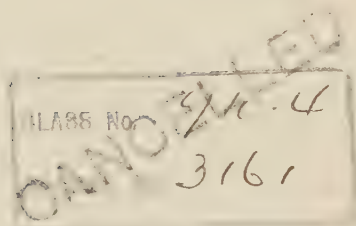
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PERCY J. KING

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TO
HARRY AND MARY

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MEET THE HUNTER

MY friend, Fred Burdett—one of the first prospectors of the big Kimberley Gold-Rush, a noted pearler, explorer, and orchid-collector—was chatting with me, only a few weeks ago, while we watched the last of his kit being dumped in a lorry. He was very solicitous, I remember, about an elderly cane arm-chair of sedate appearance: you wouldn't dream it had ever been capsized in a sudden dash for safety on the bank of a crocodile-infested Calayano creek.

"Well, cheerio, old scout," he smiled, and tilted the big tropical helmet over his sunburnt nose. "See you about next June, eh?"

And off he went again, down the old trail to Zamboanga and Cebu.

Now, he is somewhere in the Islands between the Pacific Ocean and the China Sea; for forty years he has hunted among their coral reefs and cataracts and jungles.

The Hunter's work-a-day plan seems, really, more simple than it is. Usually alone, he turns up somewhere in the wilds, musters a casual gang of followers from any tribe that happens to be handy, and marches; or maybe he charts some primitive native craft and crew, and sails.

That's the stuff Adventure is made of.

So, he met Chief Godaran of the savage Igorote head-hunters ; Negrito pygmies whose poisoned arrows are the terror of the forests of Luzon : Dusun python-hunters in the Borneo jungles of perpetual twilight ; corsairs and sultans of the Sulu Sea : the Moro warriors of Mindanao, and their conquerors—Leonard Wood, and Pershing, of the United States Army.

This, then, is an Adventure-Story of real people ; and it has no scientific pretensions of any kind, either of exotic horticulture, ethnology, or topographical survey. It is Fred Burdett speaking . . . a big bronzed Englishman, with steady blue eyes and a you-be-damned sort of chin.

P. J. K.

20th August, 1929.

The Editor is indebted to the courtesy of the *Singapore Free Press*, *Straits Times*, *Mindanao Herald*, and *Man*, the journal of the Anthropological Society, which gave prominence to F. D. Burdett's exploration of the cairns of the extinct races of Camiguin.

THE ODYSSEY OF AN ORCHID HUNTER

CHAPTER I

HOW THE HUNT BEGAN

THIS orchid-hunting business began—as so many really important things begin—with a few rather casual remarks in the ordinary course of conversation.

I was in Manila, on a lovely evening, enjoying a friendly chat with an old acquaintance—who happened to be one of the best-known orchid-collectors in the Philippine Islands. My friend offered a suggestion which seemed to me, at the time, distinctly unexciting. But in the light of my subsequent adventures as an orchid-hunter, I have often humbly meditated upon the truth of a trite and ancient axiom: You never know your luck.

Ours was a farewell chat, for I was due to leave Manila the next morning with an expedition to explore virgin forest on the coast of Northern Luzon.

“While you are there,” my friend suggested,

"keep your eyes open for orchids—especially the *Phalæanopsis* variety. If you find any, send them along to me, here. There might be money in it, for both of us."

Of course, I said I would. It was that evening hour in the tropics when man feels benignant towards his fellows. The long chair on my friend's pleasant verandah was very comfortable, and the long drink in my tumbler was cool and good. But I don't suppose I said it with any marked enthusiasm. I was more interested, at the moment, in getting a profitable concession in the forest of Northern Luzon. And I could say a lot, if I liked, about the multitude of fantastic projects which have been put up to me by optimists: and all of them have said, "There might be money in it. . . ." As I have said before, the notion of orchid-hunting did not appeal to me as an exciting one—picking flowers. Besides, I rather flattered myself that I had already hunted most of the things that really matter: big game, and pearls, and gold, and things like that.

However, I promised to do my best, took a sip at the long tumbler in my hand, and politely inspected specimens of the *Phalæanopsis* which my friend exhibited to me. I remember how he handled them—like a very young mother with a very new baby. For in those early days it was a rare and valuable plant. I had seen it before, though not often. Its peculiarly exquisite loveliness always appealed to me more than any other variety of

the orchid. In delicate hues, ranging from purest white to rosy-purple and deep mauve, swaying gently on its fragile spikes, it seems to hover in the scented air—as if on wings. I prefer the Spanish name for it—*La Mariposa*, which means the Butterfly. There is nothing which it resembles so much. And its fleshy green leaves are as sensitive to the touch, and as easily marred, as the wings of a butterfly: a fact which was to be impressed upon me, painfully, later on.

And so, with a final assurance that I would certainly keep a sharp look-out for *La Mariposa* during my travels in Northern Luzon, I vanished into the wilds of the forest—and clean forgot all about it. For my explorations provided me with more than a few crowded hours of excitement. This trip was another one of those projects as to which I had been assured “there might be money in it.” But though it was very interesting, it was not very profitable. Our concession was never applied for. My companion—a sawmill-owner who was on the financial end of the deal—had a difference of opinion with his colleagues who were helping to put up the cash. And these astute businessmen (as the poet said) folded their tents like the Arabs, and silently stole away. . . . Perhaps it is not so very surprising, in the sad circumstances, that I forgot beautiful things like orchids.

However, I had something else up my sleeve. I think I may say that I was not known, in those parts, as “The Old Scout” for nothing. I always

went about with my eyes open. And I had seen something on the great plateau at the back of Pasuquin, Ilocos Norte, which seemed to me to be much more important than orchids: small deposits of magnesite. I had little doubt that big deposits were to be found there also: it was only a matter of prospecting, and finding somebody to put up the money to market the stuff.

I reported my discovery to a mining expert in Manila and he displayed the liveliest interest. It appeared that there was something like an American "boom" in magnesite, just then.

"There's a big demand for it in the States," said he, and paused, pensively masticating the end of a Manila cigar. "I'll tell you what I can do. I can find the money to open up a magnesite deposit, provided that it is extensive enough to warrant us working it, and providing that transportation is not too difficult. Now, if you think you can find a place like that near Pasuquin, go right ahead. I'll stand all expenses of the trip."

It was in the month of May that I arrived at Pasuquin and mobilized a small army of Ilocano *cargadores*, as we call our porters in that part of the world, and commenced the ascent to the plateau of Ilocos Norte, which rises to a height of 2,700 feet above the sea. After a hard day's climb, we camped for the night under a clump of stunted pines. It is a remarkable fact that one never sees a tree much more than about ten feet in height anywhere on the plateau. And there's a mighty

powerful reason: up on that windswept table-land, the tropical storms are of such terrific violence that tree-tops are simply torn clean off. It looks as if some methodical giant, armed with a pair of titanic shears, had cropped them all level. It was for this reason, by the way, that I had chosen the month of May for my expedition—a season when the rude Philippino Boreas is not rampaging quite so rudely as usual.

After our exertions of the day, none of us felt much good for anything but a square meal and a long sleep. We had, of course, brought the inevitable tinned stuff with us, but I knew there was plenty of game on the plateau, so I shouldered a gun and went after it, with a few Ilocano boys to carry my bag. Canned "chow" is good enough when you can't get anything else, but it is a lazy brute who eats it when fresh meat and birds are to be had for a little gunning.

We returned in triumph with a couple of fine fat bucks and twelve brace of big red-necked mallards which I found on the ponds.

My Ilocanos—who were gathering wood and lighting camp-fires—received us with acclamations. These fellows live chiefly on a dreadful fish-product which they call *bugaan*, and I don't wonder that they welcome a variation from their staple diet—though, from some mistaken sense of tribal pride or tradition, they actually pretend to like the stuff, as some Scotchmen pretend to like haggis. It is no use being fussy about food on a job like

mine. There have been times when my menu has included novelties which I would rather forget : but at this Ilocano *bugaan* I have always firmly drawn the line, and I shall continue to do so. *Bugaan* has a distinctive odour which is, let us say, rather pronounced. . . . My Ilocano boys have assured me that its flavour is very tasty indeed ; and that if you screw up your courage and have one big bite at it, you forget all about its—*bouquet*. But I regard this statement with grave suspicion, though I have never put it to the supreme test. Personally, I feel that the supercharged atmosphere which hovers around a dish of *bugaan* is numbered among the things I could never forget. And I have noticed that my Ilocanos will never even look at the stuff if there is any meat in my larder.

Anyway, we all fed royally that night and snoozed in the grateful warmth of roaring camp-fires : at such an altitude the nights are chilly.

I wouldn't, for the world, say anything uncomplimentary about the blessings of civilization : but it is on open-air nights like this, under the stars, when the still palm-fronds overhead reflect the glow of red-hot embers, that an old wanderer like me feels as good as a king. I take a sinful pride in feeling that I have been at grips with Nature all day long and wrested from her all I need with my bare hands.

At the first pale streak of dawn I was out of my warm blankets—up and off, with a couple of Ilocanos, to have my first look-see for that

magnesite deposit, that precious rock of snowy white. Perhaps I should strike it lucky to-day. And perhaps not. To-day, to-morrow, or the day after—who knows? After all, it's the sporting chance that matters. Without it, there isn't a thrill in life. I have always felt that way, and I suppose I always shall—I have felt like that, weighted down with a diver's suit in the deep sea, grubbing for pearls—or washing for gold, with my eyes sticking out of my head like door-knobs.

We rode out at dawn, the three of us—the two Ilocanos and myself—mounted for the occasion on sturdy little Ilocano ponies. Hardy beasts they are, sure-footed as a goat in the mountains, but I look more imposing on a sixteen-hands hunter. With my long, lanky legs, I had to ride with my knees in my mouth to keep my feet off the ground.

Fun started almost before we were out of sight of our camp. I had whistled my dogs when I turned out—a big black Manchurian chow, and a useful bull-terrier bitch, both of them with a heart of a lion. Suddenly, there was an almighty how-d'ye-do in the undergrowth—and out they came with bared teeth, showing all the whites of their eyes, hustling quite a sizeable wild boar out into the open. He certainly was a very wild boar indeed. He looked as mad as a hatter, and pretty ugly, too, flashing his sharp glistening tusks in all directions. But out he had to come, whether he liked it or not. Those two plucky dogs seemed

to be on all sides of him at once, attacking him with short savage rushes until he was so badly rattled that all I had to do was to stroll up and put a charge of buckshot behind his ear.

After that—with the exception of a few of those delectable red-necked mallards, whose family we had depleted for supper last night—we saw very little of wild life.

Trotting on, I soon got down to business—the magnesite business. I had no difficulty in striking the line of small deposits which I had seen before, and I decided to follow them in a northerly direction, where I noted that the plateau began to slope down into a deep gorge. That was a likely place, among big fissures of the lower levels, to find larger deposits.

On the look-out for the dazzling rock—which cropped up here and there—we three rode, now, with wide intervals between us so as to cover as much ground as possible. I had turned out without my binoculars, but my eyes are pretty keen and I could just make out—on the lee side of a glen, far away on my extreme right—a very large, but indistinct, splash of white. I was just a little puzzled, because I had often hunted over the same ground, yet I could not remember having seen it before.

Was it to be to-day, after all? Had I struck it lucky, at the first time of asking? Hopefully, I pushed my old pony on. This began to look like a marvellous stroke of luck. I imagined the

congratulations of my mining friend. I imagined the first consignments being shipped to the United States. Best of all, I thought of the good American dollars flowing into my banking-account. I kicked my pony in the ribs again.

But then, I began to feel some sort of prickling doubt about my find. The nearer I got, the less it looked like magnesite, although—so far—I could not make out exactly what it was: I only knew what it wasn't. Nearer yet, that great splash of snowy whiteness seemed to begin to disintegrate until I stared hard at it, scarcely able to believe the evidence of my own good eyes.

Orchids!

Phalæanopsis!

La Mariposa!

Mass upon mass of exotic blooms gently swaying on their slim spikes, growing in such lavish profusion, clustered together so densely, that, in the far distance, they had looked like one huge solid splash of white upon the landscape.

Magnesite?

In that exciting moment I had clean forgotten all about magnesite . . . just as cleanly as I had forgotten all about orchids and orchid-hunting.

Yes. I had struck it lucky, though not with magnesite deposits.

I had simply stumbled—by sheer gorgeous luck—on an enormous natural plantation of the most beautiful orchids in the Philippines. I could hardly believe it. I could hear my head Ilocano—his

name was Bartolomeo—jabbering dementedly. He was almost as excited as I was. But I took no notice of Bartolomeo. I slid off my pony and stood stock-still, staring.

I shall never forget the beauty of that scene in the orchid-glen. I gazed upon it, speechless, entranced. Seldom, if ever before, can human eyes have beheld such a riot of rare and lovely flowers amid their natural surroundings. Reverently, I felt that I was standing in the loveliest garden God ever made.

Never, so long as I live, shall I forget my glen of orchids at Ilocos Norte. My first thrill as an orchid-hunter will remain with me as long as life itself. No words could picture the grandeur of that scene. I can only feebly try to help the reader to imagine it by noting the fact that the flowers—each a perfect specimen of the rarest and loveliest kind—were numbered, literally, in hundreds of thousands.

Such was my first “bag” as an orchid-hunter.

Never since, so far, has it been my good fortune to discover another beauty-spot anything like it.

Let nobody ever tell me that there’s no such thing as luck.

Until I stumbled upon it—looking for something else—I had almost forgotten that such a flower existed. And there I was—as if some Philippino fairy of the glen had waved her magic wand—amid the most marvellous natural collection of

Phalæanopsis ever seen in the Philippine Islands, and perhaps anywhere in the world.

Luck ?

Of course it was luck. I had learned that orchid-hunting is like gold-mining and pearl-fishing : a fascinating risky gamble with Old Dame Nature who has a way of handing out big prizes at unexpected moments, if she doesn't hand you a terrific wallop instead.

Yes, this was one of my lucky streaks : and I recalled two others, as I stood there, thoughtfully, enraptured by my find. Once I took £9,000 worth of gold out of the earth, in nine days. And the other was only a one-day job of work, one never-to-be-forgotten day when I lifted pearls from the ocean-bed to the value of £2,000. And now this, my first "bag" as an orchid-hunter, actually consisted of 47,000 plants : that was the checked-out total of the first consignment as it reached Manila.

Which brings me to the melancholy part of this story—the collection and packing and shipment of those delicate and lovely blooms. I was almost afraid to touch them. It seemed all wrong. I hated to begin it. It seemed like desecrating the loveliest garden God ever made—that phrase had fixed itself in my mind, and I found myself repeating it. The loveliest garden God ever made . . . and I was going to root it up, and tear it down, and parcel it, and sell it off.

Further prospecting for magnesite was indefinitely

postponed. The shipment of the orchids was a big job. I delayed it as long as I dared. I suppose I was time-wasting, really. I pottered around, doing a little hunting, always returning to feast my eyes on my fairy-glen.

“ We’ll really start to-morrow,” I said.

And we didn’t, not until several to-morrows had come and gone.

At last, I sent down to Pasuquin for a gang of women-carriers, and when they arrived the deed was done: the fell work began. After the first day’s vandalism I hadn’t the heart to go near it. I kept out of sight of the hacking and dragging and bundling. I dubbed myself in disgust, “ King of the Vandals.”

We got it away at last—five hundred loads. Later on, a huge American freight-car went rumbling away to Manila with the biggest consignment of orchids ever shipped from the Philippine Islands—I think I am safe in claiming that record.

* * * * *

I was still uncomfortably haunted by visions of my desecrated glen when I went down to Manila to collect my share of the proceeds. Seemed like blood-money to me, while I was waiting for it. But human nature is frail, and idealists have to come back to earth sometimes. I am bound to confess that a big fat wad of notes—of a fatness undreamed of in my wildest moments of the most sanguine expectations—entirely altered my views. Indeed, I rather felt as if somebody had suddenly

clapped a pair of rose-tinted spectacles on my sunburnt nose. And from that day in Manila, henceforth my feet were upon the slippery path of the orchid-hunter.

* * * * *

You may remember that I remarked, earlier, that the fleshy green leaves of the *Phalæanopsis* are easily bruised, being extremely sensitive to touch. I can still remember what my friend the orchid-collector said to me about the way my first consignment was packed. . . . But his remarks are not suitable for reproduction in this story.

CHAPTER II

PYTHON-HUNTING WITH THE DUSUNS

A FRESH expedition changed the scene of my orchid-hunting from the Philippine Islands to British North Borneo.

Voyaging westwards from Mindanao and across the Sulu Sea, I started on a five-months' job of prospecting and exploring among Borneo's hills and valleys, rivers and jungles. During this time I had little opportunity of enjoying the social amenities of pleasant places like Jesselton, for instance—where life goes on cheerily, with tennis and bridge and poker at the club-house where everybody who is anybody is to be met at sundown, spruce and thirsty.

My work, as usual, kept me off the beaten track of civilisation. There was no club-house for the old orchid-hunter. I lived the simple life with my Dusun bearers, pitching camp wherever the day's work happened to finish: my quarters consisted of a portable shelter of bamboo, palm-leaves and jungle-grass, which could be dismantled and packed in ten minutes.

From the coastal Malay villages, we hacked our way inland through jungle so dense that we lived

for weeks in an eerie atmosphere of perpetual twilight. The intertwining foliage of giant trees shut out the light of day like a heavy curtain and seemed to create a brooding silence in the forests. Slowly we forged ahead, wading breast-high in the undergrowth while my sturdy Dusuns hewed out a path with their heavy *parangs*.

Before we quit the coast, however, I met Bajaos and Dusuns in the villages that seem to stand on stilts in the water. With thatched gabled roofs, these crazy dwellings are nearly all built high up on piles and the water ebbs and flows beneath. Each house has its own crude little jetty with a heavy ladder leading down to the householder's moored boat. The exception to this rule is provided by the tree-dwellers who build huts among the branches of trees growing by the water's edge. The top of the tree is hacked off, the bole and thicker lower boughs being utilised as foundation.

The villagers are an odd lot. Climbing down from his gabled house of dried leaves and saplings, you will see a fellow hailing his neighbour for a chat. He wears a squat turban, and a loin-cloth with a drooping end in front something like a Highlander's sporan. His crony probably affects a different mode of dress. Very likely it consists of a prodigious hat with a brim broader than his shoulders, and a very short shirt and nothing else.

Meantime, a Bajao comes swaggering along in his Sunday suit which is as scanty as it is decorative. Most of it is hat. It is a wonderful hat which may

be anything up to a yard high, spangled and plumed. The shape of it in front might be a caricature of an archbishop's mitre or a cardinal's hat. He is naked to the waist except for Bajao necklace and bangles, and a wide sash sustains his sword in a brightly ornamented scabbard of barbaric design.

And nearby there is a Bajao boatman, busy with his paddles and gear on the shore. He seems to be the sole proud owner—in this seaside community—of a pair of trousers.

Fashions for the fair sex may be studied in the *padday* (rice) fields where the Dusun women are at work—pounding and cleaning the rice and carrying it in huge wicker baskets. Here is a bright-eyed little lady with her hair done in a bun on the top of her head—and done very neatly too. Her dark sleeveless tunic is fastened in the front by six bright buttons. But the bottom of her tunic leaves off early, and the top of her petticoat starts so late that there is a hiatus—displaying a plump naked stomach, which is rather startling to new-comers in these parts: it looks as though there has been an accident, but, in fact, it is all decreed by Madame La Mode of the Far East. And modes have to be adopted and lived up to in a Dusun village just as strictly—and irrespective of embarrassment—as in Bond Street. It may be that, according to your ideas, the stomach is not an alluring charm of the female form divine. But then you have to remember that if a Bond



IUSUN WOMEN CARRIERS IN BRITISH NORTH BORNEO

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Street hairdresser tried to shingle a Dusun belle, they would make an awful hash of him with their husbands' *parangs*.

The Dusun beauty decorates her slender rounded arms and ankles with brass and silver bangles, and she has a special weakness for girdles of bright brass wire worn around the hips in three or four coils.

Walking with that lithe sway from the hips that belongs so naturally to Eastern women, a company of Dusun women-carriers on the march is an impressive and rather beautiful sight.

You may meet them at twilight, coming in when the day's work in the plantation is done. Their Mongolian features are inscrutable as they troop past in single file, bare-footed, making hardly a sound, lithe strength and an inimitable gracefulness in every supple movement, their dark draperies girdled with brass and swaying as they walk. . . . Looking at them, beneath canopied palms that spread ten thousand feathery fronds against an evening sky of opalescent tints, I have sometimes felt that the only blot on the landscape was a certain old orchid-hunter in khaki shorts, bush-shirt, and a big helmet that has seen better days.

In the Borneo *padday* fields, a mud-sleigh drawn by buffaloes is among the strange sights to be seen—specially designed for transportation of produce when fields are flooded and the draught-buffaloes must wade through seas of mud to the height of their bellies. Made of a few lengths of

stout bamboo lashed together, with yoke and shafts, it is a very primitive affair, but quite effective for its purpose.

The native driver rides his buffalo, sitting sideways on the beast, with his legs well drawn up and the nose-ring reins dangling negligently from his left hand, and he appears to doze in a state of semi-coma with a far-off look in his eyes.

These big clumsy buffaloes, long in the barrel with stumpy legs and a head not at all unlike a huge pig, contribute nothing to the natural beauties of the landscape; and they go through with their job at their own solemn pace and with a bovine meditative air which seems impervious alike to nose-ring or goad. The Borneo buffalo has his uses, but he certainly is not a good-looker. And when he happens to have five legs instead of four—like a brute I saw being ridden through the squelching *padday* slime—his appearance is not enhanced. The extra limb was a central fore-leg sprung slightly in advance of the near and off fore—and I did not like the look of it at all. To complete the picture, I would add briefly that the rider was not noticeably handsomer than his mount. . . . No, the Far Eastern scene is not always so picturesque.

I could never wish to have finer men with me than these Dusuns of the north-east whose clearings I entered some thirty-five miles from the coast. It was up a stream, which I have christened Python River, where I saw these fearless snake-hunters

perform astonishing feats. The river meanders through the densest Borneo jungle, and the overhanging branches of the trees are alive with pythons. You might well imagine that the Dusun would take care to give these huge snakes a very wide berth—I may say that their length may be anything up to about twelve feet. But, on the contrary, he has only to espy a python coiled on a branch, or lurking wickedly in the fork of a tree, when he shins up after the brute and starts the most hair-raising kind of fight I have ever seen!

There is a reason.

To the Dusuns, python-flesh is a delicious dainty. They are great python-eaters. It astonished me to see how eagerly they will penetrate deep into these darkened, dank, snake-infested forests, when most fellows would have preferred to take some other—and perhaps less exciting—turning. I should say that the Dusun tribe is thoroughly hated by those pythons—the fearful rage of these giant reptiles when attacked in their lairs is a sight not readily forgotten. The Dusun python-hunt appealed to me enormously. It was a case of putting the shoe on the other foot with a vengeance. I have seen a great many snakes of all varieties in my time, and my chief recollection is the agility displayed by man in leaping out of their way. A hissing serpent, coiled to strike, is one of the ugliest things—and the cold touch of its live slithering scales, if you have ever experienced it, is a sensation to make your scalp creep. . . . But my

Dusuns up a python-tree were as unconcerned and sporty as an American on a Scottish grouse-moor. Armed only with his beloved *parang*, he wades into that old python so heartily that the tables are completely turned—and it's the big snake that urgently wants to get away, hissing like a locomotive, his ugly yellow jaws agape.

By the way, I had a minor encounter with a snake in Borneo which, somehow or other, sticks in my mind. Seated placidly under a tree in our camp, I reached for one of my shot-guns to clean it. I had plugged the muzzle, as usual, to keep damp from the lining of the bore. With my pipe well alight, I broke down the gun-breech after removing the plug, and cocking the muzzle skywards I took a squint through the barrel. A snake fell out of the barrel on my face.

It was only a little fellow, a whiplash of a thing not more than eighteen inches long, but when it was within an inch of my nose it looked as big as a python. I yelled and jumped to my feet, dropping that gun as if it were red-hot!

When one of my bearers brought the dead snake to me, holding it up by the tip of its pencil-pointed tail, I could hardly believe my eyes. Only a few moments before when its writhing cold scales hit my cheek, I would have sworn—if the little beggar hadn't been very neatly killed and exhibited to me—that I had been attacked by . . . well, we all know the prodigious size of the fish we *nearly* caught!



TRANSPORT IN THE RICE-FIELDS OF BORNEO

This is a "mud-sleigh," used when the fields are heavy with slimy mud

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I embarked for a trip up the Python River with a fleet of six dug-outs and twelve Dusun bearers who were evidently looking forward gleefully to a big bag of toothsome python further up the stream—nearby their own clearings I did not see a single python, for the very good reason that the Dusuns had eaten them all.

Paddling easily up-stream, with a vigilant boatman at the bow and stern of every one of our flotilla of half a dozen dug-outs, we passed clearings in the jungle where the Dusun villages peeped at us—bamboo stockades, thatched huts huddled together and dwarfed by the stately trees of enormous height that fringe the edges of the forest. Villagers squatting on the ground turned their heads to look at us and watched us out of sight. I noticed that the walls of some of their huts displayed examples of mural art, as practised by the Dusuns. One of these looked like a very large dog-kennel, with a low round hole for entrance—probably a store-house or granary. The walls on either side of the entrance were decorated by grotesque human figures crudely painted and depicted in the act of putting their fingers to their noses at each other—I think we used to call it “pulling-long-bacon” when I was a rude school-boy. Bodies and limbs were painted in light garish colours, but feet, hands and head were black while the eyes were treated by the Dusun artist in the fashion of the White-eyed Kaffir. Those daubed figures, with simian limbs and sinister faces, defying

all the laws of the anatomy of mankind, seemed not inappropriate on the banks of Python River where the primeval jungle began. . . . I smiled, irresistibly reminded of the figure of Rima in Hyde Park.

We had passed the last of the clearings when we camped for the night, and on the following day the jungle of the real python-country swallowed us. It was here that we glided into the region of perpetual twilight. Our laden dug-outs entered a tortuous silent tunnel whose leaning walls and lowly-hanging roof were the inter-locked boughs and branches and leaves and tendrils of trees that crowded either bank; only the slenderest darts of sunshine shot slantwise through the interstices, playing odd tricks with one's eyesight.

The little Dusun boatmen quivered with excitement, just keeping the dug-outs moving with their paddles, moving stealthily with hardly a ripple on the surface of the water. They were watching the overhanging branches and still foliage, heads flung back, their dilated eyes ringed with white. All day they had talked snake, and I believe those python-eaters dream snake all night. And now the fun was going to begin.

I'll confess I was all keyed up. And perhaps not quite so comfortable as I might have been . . . somewhere else. The certain knowledge that unseen pythons were coiled in the forks and branches of the trees, so close to the top of my helmet, was just a bit weird. Remember, I was merely a

passenger among the python-hunters, new to the sport, and wondering what was going to happen next. For instance, I wondered what the best python-hunters have to do if a ten-foot snake happens to drop into their small dug-out and start rampaging? I certainly had lots to learn that day.

Naturally, my eyes were uneasily ranging among the thick overhanging foliage which seemed much too lifeless to be true. I could see nothing but scarred yellowish bark and green leaves. Nature has so cunningly camouflaged the python's skin that it seems to assimilate its leafy surroundings—to vision less acute than the roving eye of the snake-hunters.

My dug-out stopped. The Dusun in the stern shipped his paddle, but he had never taken his eyes off the branches overhead. He flung up an arm, pointing.

“*Ula!*” he yelled. “*Ula!*”

Ula! Snake!

The boatman grabbed a low branch and swung himself up into the tree. Getting astride of a gnarled bough, he began to work his way outwards towards the middle of the stream, drawing his *parang*.

There was an instant upheaval in the densely clustered leaves and twining tendrils. Terrifically, the foliage woke to life and a ten-foot python's long flat head reared up, the big yellow mouth agape, hissing, the mighty coils slithering and

writhing—truly, an awe-inspiring spectacle of reptilian ferocity !

I honestly believe I should have fallen out of that tree, with sheer fright. Without a gun, I wouldn't have ventured within striking distance of those hideous jaws—not for all the orchids in Borneo. But my little Dusun lashed out with his *parang*, three blows in less than a second of time. I never saw a cat strike quicker. And every blow went straight to the mark . . . *thud ! thud ! thud !* The big snake's head jerked sideways, oddly like a boxer who had been socked on the jaw, and the full length of his sinuous coils went mad. Despite his fearsome appearance and great size, it was clear that he didn't like what was coming to him. In the language of the Ring, the Dusun's whirlwind attack had got him groggy. That flailing *parang* was all over him . . . *thud ! thud ! thud !* Leaves and bark were ripped from the boughs and littered the still surface of the river. In our dug-outs down below, we were yelling with excitement. The python peered at us wickedly, and just in that fraction of a second he stopped another whizzing clout on the head and visibly wilted so that the follow-up missed him and whanged against a tough branch with an ugly sound that told us how hard our friend was hitting.

That seemed to decide the first round, for our snake evidently thought the tree was altogether too hot to hold him. He uncoiled himself and dropped into the water. Then the real fun started.



OUR FLOTILLA OF DUSUN DUG-OUTS PADDLING UP THE PYTHON RIVER
The natives in branches of the trees are alive with snakes

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Six sturdy Dusuns went after him, and grabbed him in six places at once with their bare hands and arms. One put a strangle-hold on him, just below the head. The others hugged him, at intervals of a foot or so, between head and tail.

The strength of an enraged python is prodigious. Though held tenaciously by six strong men, his convulsive struggles dragged them in all directions. But the Dusuns hung on grimly. Strong as he was—and his body was as thick as a man's leg—his captors were stronger. Warily they prevented him from hitching on to anything with his tail, and they dragged his head over the thwart of one of the dug-outs where another Dusun was waiting with his *parang* poised.

Thud! thud! thud!

The back of the heavy *parang*—not the cutting edge—was used throughout this combat of man *versus* reptile.

Thud! thud! thud!

Using the dug-out as a kind of butchering-block, he bludgeoned the giant snake to death. He hammered its head into pulp. When its huge limp length was dragged into the boat, there wasn't a tremor from tip to tail. Inert and coiled up, stowed away like an old rope's-end, the hunters left him. Their blood was up. Laughing, jabbering excitedly, craning their necks and gazing up into the trees, they prepared for another attack.

Their shrill yells in the fight that had just ended, the flurry of the water and the whanging

and thudding of the *parangs*, had raised the alarm among the tree-dwelling python families. Now we could see them plainly enough, the ripple of their coils along the branches, and the quick menacing movement of their darting heads.

Another Dusun swung up into the trees and tackled a big fellow coiled along an outlying branch. He was not easily dislodged. Well hitched on with his mighty tail, he reared up and confronted the attack, open-mouthed—making a row like a pressure-valve blowing off. But the intrepid hunter beat him up with a tornado of slashing welts that landed heavily. Twice I thought the snake would coil and envelop him. But they were only feints to which the Dusun replied with even more savage onslaughts—until that python simply had to go, whether he wanted to, or not. He abandoned his stronghold in the tree and hit the water with a huge splash.

He must have been over twelve feet long, but the waiting Dusuns went for him—like terriers at a rat. The whole six of them fixed their hold upon him, yelling, straining every nerve and muscle, shaking spray from their eyes as he flailed them about. They couldn't straighten him. He was too strong and big. He dragged them hither and thither, contorting his body in hideous fury, coiling and uncoiling like a resilient steel spring—in sudden jerks, again and again.

I yelled myself hoarse. I was thrilled to the soles of my feet. You will get some faint idea of

this aquatic *rodeo*, if you try to imagine a buck-jumping twelve-foot python trying to throw six men at once. . . . *And* he threw them. He sent the whole half-dozen flying. They were flung off him, unshipped by resistless serpentine convulsions. There was a demented windmill of legs and arms before they sunk. And when they came up, coughing and laughing, the indignant python was shifting for his sylvan home ashore, like a twelve-foot torpedo . . . *whoosh!*

He was the only lucky one of the nine water-pythons we assaulted that day. When our sport was over, I took a snapshot of eight beautiful skins—all much longer than the height of a very tall man—hanging out to dry on the thatch of my portable shack.

Gazing at them, reflectively, it seemed to me that I had been privileged to witness the most exciting and purely sporting hunt in the world. It had been a really stirring experience, even to a hard-bitten hunter like myself. It appealed to my sporting instincts so strongly because the Dusuns attacked their formidable quarry in its own difficult strongholds and then disdained to hack with the *parang*'s cutting edge, using their weapon only as a bludgeon and actually tackling the snakes with bare hands.

The Dusun python-hunt made a deep impression upon me as a sportsman. I was enthusing about it one day to a Chinese trader in Penang who had spent many years in Borneo.

" . . . Marvellous," I said, " to take risks like that. Very sporting indeed. Why, they could cut 'em to pieces if they like to use the edge, and the python wouldn't stand half a chance."

The old Chinaman's slit-eyes regarded me politely.

" Sporting," he said and blinked, folding his hands upon an excessively capacious stomach. " Yes. Maybe. Perhaps not. No, it is *tabu* to cut the skin of the python. The Dusun people believe that if they make the smallest incision in the skin of a living snake, its spirit would escape and haunt them to their dying day."

Well, I certainly shed an illusion then : but I still maintain that, for sheer thrills, a Dusun python-hunt is the finest sport in the world.

On the Python River, however, thrills and hazards were not restricted to big snake-hunting. Navigation provided us with plenty of exciting moments as we negotiated the difficult upper reaches where we began to encounter the roaring cataracts and lesser waterfalls by which this river makes its way down to the sea. Here, indeed, were scenes of rare and majestic splendour—yet they soon lost their charm, for over every one of them we were obliged to manhandle dug-outs and stores, hauling and shoving them up and over the sheer streaming rocks.

It was like making an ascent of a giant staircase. At each climb we found the higher levels of the water running broad and deep. The jungle thinned



A VILLAGE WHERE THE DUSUN PYTHON-HUNTERS LIVE, IN BORNEO

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and we emerged from the twilight of the Borneo forests into sunshine.

Near the rapids, we found some ugly water always, but my stout Dusun boatmen never put a paddle wrong, nor showed the flicker of an eyelash: they do say, in Borneo, that a Dusun will pilot his dug-out anywhere on the rivers where a fish can swim. They were great little men, all of them, of whom I vividly remember a quiet modest little chap called Adjao.

Adjao was our champion python-hunter, the same husky sportsman who beat up the twelve-footer that escaped. I persuaded him to pose for my camera one day, and I still have the snapshot. As a specimen of photography it isn't too good. The picture is faintly blurred because the champion python-hunter was too nervous to keep still. He was scared of the camera's eye. He stood like a bashful school-girl, half-smiling, with downcast lashes: but coiled around Adjao's neck were a brace of pythons he had killed with his *parang*. I noted their measurements on the back of the print—nine feet and ten inches, and ten feet and six inches.

I have seen Adjao whack a hissing python out of its tree-nest into the river below and dive after it so swiftly as to hit the water almost as soon as the snake. He was always the first to grab his python and—if the hunters had caught a Tartar—the last to let go. Adjao certainly goes into my portrait-gallery of the jungle's Best People.

This little Dusun sportsman owes nothing to any gentleman on the score of courage and modesty.

I distinctly remember his chagrin one day when I refused to stop and allow him to fight an unusually truculent snake that reared up angrily as we passed below its tree-nest, opened its big yellow mouth and let fly a venomous hiss. Adjao, no doubt, took that as an insolent defiance which was not to be endured by any python-hunter worth his salt. His eyes snapped on to that snake wickedly and, for a moment, he looked more like some wild animal from the jungle than a human being. His facial expression said, more plainly than if he had spoken: "I'll fight you for that!" . . . But I was in a hurry to get to our next camping-ground. And Adjao had already had enough fights that day to last any ordinary man for a month. So I said, No. And when the *Tuan* said, No, Adjao knew that he meant it, and accepted the inevitable—but with an air of deepest chagrin, glancing sullenly backward, fingering the handle of his *parang*. One rather gathered that never before had a python been saucy to Adjao and lived to tell the tale.

But he managed a smile when I gave him a cheery word or two. We were always good friends, Adjao and I.

* * * * *

I soon began to realise that my explorations up the Python River were imposing too much upon my willing Dusuns. The arduous passage

of cataract after cataract, ever climbing to a high level, alternated, now, with a fresh kind of obstruction of the fairway—again and again, our progress was barred by great trees that had fallen across the river. Some we were able to drag out of our way. Others were practically immovable, and so we had to haul our dug-outs across and launch them on the other side—a very difficult, and often dangerous, task.

At length, I gave the order to return to the Dusun *kampung* whence we had started.

Well-fed with their favourite dish of python-flesh, my fellows were happy enough. Also, they had plenty of python-skins for which there is a fair demand. Personally, I never ate the python—it seemed rather beastly, to me—and so I know nothing about the flavour which so tickles the Dusun palate. The smell of it, cooking, was enough for me.

I heard many python-stories in our camp at night, and one of the older Dusuns told me that there are snakes of much greater length and girth than any we had seen on this trip. But I doubt if snakes in that district are so big as the huge boa-constrictors of the Mindanao and Luzon jungles of the Philippine Islands.

The Dusuns' stories of very big snakes tended to corroborate what I had been told, years ago, by an Australian prospector on one of the rivers of Southern British Borneo. He declared that he had been compelled to cease work and abandon a

good location because the place was infested with enormous pythons. "We simply had to pack up and clear out," he said. "You see, Fred, it sort of cramps your style when a bunch of damned great pythons keep on popping in just to see how you're getting on. I'm telling you, those infernal snakes took a darnsight too much interest in what we were doing. . . ."

In Borneo, the pythons I saw ranged usually from six to eight feet in length. On the Python River, ten-footers were exceptional and twelve-footers rare. Their skins were very beautifully marked, shaded in rich tints of golden-bronze; I brought one home with me as a souvenir of the hunting prowess of Adjao and his comrades. Although this was a big fellow, an eight-footer, when the skin was cleaned and dried it was so silky and fine that it barely scaled a couple of ounces.

Incidentally, that skin bears plain evidence of the Dusuns' method of killing their python without employing the *parang's* cutting-edge. There is not a blemish on it, except near the head where the heaviest and fiercest bludgeoning was done—but it is uncut anywhere.

Every night, my bearers and boatmen had a banquet of python-flesh. In Northern Luzon, I had seen the pygmy Negritos eat python; and I observed that the Dusun method of cooking and preparing the dish is similar to theirs.

First, the skins were carefully removed and hung up on the trees to dry—sometimes there

would be half a dozen festooning the branches of a willow, their golden-bronze scales glinting warmly in the flicker and glow of our camp-fire. Then the flesh was chopped into portions—much as one chops a banana through—and slowly boiled in a hollow bamboo filled with water.

As I have already remarked, I never tasted the stuff, but it has a peculiar fishy odour: hence my order in the camp, No python-cooking to windward! My Dusuns would sit around the fire with their mouths watering—at a respectful distance from the *Tuan*. And when they started to devour their snake-supper on the other side of the camp, I could hear them. . . . They went to it like wolves.

A snake I have never yet met in the jungles where my job has called me, is the dreaded *Hamadryad*, or King-cobra, reputed by experienced hunters to be the most aggressive and fearless in the world. Armed with deadly poisonous fangs, when he rears up on his mighty twelve-foot coils to strike there is sudden death in the air.

Some of the lesser creatures of the jungle, however, are foul fellows to have around you. There were jungle-leeches, for instance, who were always with us. And I often saw that odd little reptile, the fly-catching lizard. Neither his appearance nor his table-manners are engaging. He has a froggy head, spidery legs, and an ugly tail about three times as long as his spotty snaky body. In search of his favourite diet—flies—he is naturally

attracted by any disgusting odour. . . . But perhaps the least said about his habits, the better.

* * * * *

On our return journey down to the sea, and to the *Kampung* where my Dusuns lived, navigating the Python River did not, of course, present so many hardships—we were descending, instead of ascending, that giant's staircase of cataracts, waterfalls, and rapids. Still, it was fairly tough work going down; and, though they had enjoyed good sport and hearty meals of their favourite dish, my followers seemed glad to be back home.

Especially Sunny Jim.

I had almost completely forgotten Sunny Jim, though his distinguished conduct on our python-hunting trip certainly calls for a "mention" in this *Odyssey*: his conduct was distinguished by being different from the other fellows.

Sunny Jim was a bearer, a Chinese coolie who, in some mysterious manner, contrived to mix himself up with the Dusuns when I engaged a gang at the *Kampung* and wangled a job for himself in my outfit. Maybe he thought I had a nice kind face. His name wasn't Sunny Jim, not really. The patronymic to which he answered (if you could say it) was, I thought, excessively Chinese. I am glad to say I forget what that Chinese appellation really was. Anyway, I always called him Sunny Jim—my little joke—because he never smiled again after he learned (when it was too late to go back) that we were going a-hunting



FRED BURDITT ADMIRING EIGHT BIG PYTHONS WHICH HAVE JUST BEEN KILLED BY HIS FEARLESS DUSUN HUNTERS

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among the giant pythons. You see what had happened: Sunny Jim, in his laudable desire to get a job with a fatherly-looking white *Tuan* where there was plenty of *chow*, found—to his dismay—that he was irrevocably connected with the wrong department.

Rarely does a Chinaman's face tell you what he is thinking about and, up to a point, Sunny Jim's was no exception to the rule. His stoical expression held—more or less—when our dug-outs glided into the jungle twilight, but his slit-eyes narrowed as they followed the intent upward gaze of the Dusun python-hunters, staring into the mysterious foliage above.

Even then, I don't think he had any idea of what was going to happen. It is more than likely that he thought I was going to take pot-shots at any snake that might appear—and the Asiatic has great faith in the white man's gun, when it isn't pointed at him.

He certainly wilted when Adjao yelled "*Ula!*"

Sunny Jim was a passenger in Adjao's dug-out, and so he had a front seat for the performance that followed. The fight was immediately above his head—Adjao *versus* Python, scrapping like fury on a supple branch that bent and swayed precariously.

In those crowded moments, Sunny Jim's strained countenance registered emotion in a way that would have charmed any producer of a screen-thriller. . . . If he were wondering what was going

to happen next, then his suspense was brief indeed : for when python and hunter zoomed down from the tree into the river, their falling bodies nearly capsized Sunny Jim's dug-out. He tumbled overboard, backwards, sank and bobbed up to the threshing surface in the midst of the *mêlée* . . . six Dusuns, one python, and Sunny Jim.

Poor Sunny Jim !

I really think he nearly died of fright, but we nearly died of laughing because the joke was certainly on him—he could hardly have been safer, though he wouldn't believe it. In the death-grip of the fearless Dusun hunters, that big python was much too busy and worried to bother about a scared Chinaman. And Sunny Jim, of course, could dive and swim like a fish. When he found himself alongside that very angry snake in the water, he took one horrified look at the thing—and performed the slickest dive I have ever seen in my life.

Now, the Dusuns are not devoid of a sense of humour : and I have never felt really sure that Sunny Jim was capsized into the Python River by pure accident. Those tough fellows from the Dusun *Kampung* would instinctively regard a Chinaman as fair game.

Whether of the coolie or trading classes, a Chinaman in the Far East is usually looked at sideways by the suspicious natives.

I remember a rather striking exception to this rule. It was the only occasion I remember when

they said they really liked Chinamen. There was a small Chinese community who had founded a trading-post in Western Mindanao which eventually had to be closed down and abandoned, not because business was slack, but because it was too near the country of the head-hunters and cannibals who caught a trader one day and ate him. Cannibals say that Chinese man-meat has a tasty flavour to which they were very partial. They became so fond of those Chinamen, and there were so many casualties in the community, that the survivors took fright and bolted.

CHAPTER III

THE PYGMY NEGRITOS OF NORTH-EAST LUZON

A THREE-MONTHS' expedition in search of one of the rarer varieties of orchid in the Philippine Islands brought me to the strange country of the pygmy Negritos of Luzon.

These very interesting little folk live on the northern and eastern coasts, and so my itinerary, this time, was by waterways, by canal and river down to the great lagoon by Mission Village and the open sea. My recollections of this trip are very distinct. Crowded with adventure—not always of the kind I expected—it was, perhaps, one of the most memorable journeys I ever made in the Philippines.

I ought to say at once that the kind of crew one picks up in the Philippine Islands is probably worse than anything ever dreamed of in the nightmare of a tramp-steamer's long-suffering skipper. And the boat which I had procured for our voyage was somewhat primitive. She was only twenty-eight feet from bow to stern, built of two-inch planks lashed together with rattan. There wasn't a bit of iron in her : not so much as a nail. Not exactly the kind of craft to inspire confidence, in view of the fact that

I was bound for the open sea—where foaming “combers” lash the coast and swirl angrily on the Barrier Reef, where heavy seas rage continuously for many miles out from the mainland. She did, however, possess one virtue—according to repute, she was unsinkable. Against that, I remember that she was about as handy to manœuvre as a pig at a fair.

Still, to be perfectly just, she was a faithful old craft and I parted from her with regret. So far as I know, she is still in commission at San Vicente—where I presented her, as a mark of personal esteem, to some of my little Negrito friends, who are very proud of her.

So much for our ship. As for the four Philippino hearties who composed the crew, you shall duly hear of the stuff they were made of.

Starting on a voyage in the Philippines is not quite so simple as I had thought. I bought the boat, stocked her with provisions and fresh water, and hired a crew. It seemed that there was nothing else to do but give the word “Go!” After all, I was the skipper. But the crew had other ideas. Clearly, they were in no hurry.

At the appointed hour of departure we were two men short. They were, it appeared, bidding a long, long farewell to their wives and children. I asked the remaining two if *their* farewells had been said? They answered: No, they were waiting for their mates to return. To save time, I promised to look after the boat myself while they made their *adieux*.

And I told them to look sharp about it, or else we should miss the tide. But that, of course, was exactly what they were aiming at.

Manana.

To-morrow is the time to do everything. Never to-day.

Two hours later, one of the missing turned up. I despatched an interested spectator to find the fourth and tipped him fifty cents to make a quick job of it. An hour later they returned—and it was evident, from their appearance, that they had made good use of my fifty cents. The returned mariner burst into tears, declaring thickly that he could not bear to leave his dear wife. Then, providentially it seemed, he collapsed in the bottom of the boat and began to snore in a drunken sleep.

By this time the afternoon wind was blowing freshly and my gallant crew decided, among themselves, that it would be dangerous on the bar of the Cagayan River. It would be a far, far better thing—according to them—to wait until to-morrow.

Manana.

Now I had not been twenty years in the Philippines without learning quite a lot about this *Manana* business. I said we were going to-day though, if they preferred it, we could go by the Estero—an inland waterway which connects the Cagayan with the Mission River, thirty kilometres east, where we had to cross a bar again to reach the sea.

After many lachrymose remonstrances, they capitulated and we got under weigh at last. Using oars

and sail, we were half-way to the Mission River by sundown. We cooked our supper, and I settled down for the night.

But not to sleep.

I had a mosquito-net. But I had reckoned without the sand-flies. The natives call them *nik-niks*. I called them everything during that sleepless night. They took no more notice of my mosquito-net than a good American citizen takes of the 18th Amendment.

When we resumed our journey in the morning we had to pole our craft along, as the canal was too narrow to permit the use of oars.

My gallant crew—who seemed unable to do anything afloat without making a mess of it—enlivened our slow progress by continually falling overboard and dropping their poles. But with the dawn a fair wind came up, the canal widened, and we were soon on the wide expanse of the lagoon. We had to thread our way through innumerable fish-traps, and we enjoyed fresh fish that day for our midday *chow*.

It was noon before we reached the mouth of the Buguey and Mission Rivers, but, as there was a big sea running, we decided to tie up for the night near the Mission fishing *barrio*, which is situated on a sand-spit. Somewhere near there must be an old graveyard, for while I was strolling along the beach that evening I was regaled by the spectacle of a gruesome litter of human bones. I counted three skulls, a pelvis, and numerous thigh-bones. People at the *barrio* told me that these bones are washed up by the

sea from the Chinese cemetery at Aparri, but I don't believe it. Between Mission and Aparri there is a thirty-kilometres stretch of thundering surf that would pulverise anything—even human bones—in half the distance.

Next morning, the sea was still running mountains-high. The bar of the Mission is the worst on the north-east coast: for more than half a mile out from the river's mouth the white breakers are raging. Even in comparatively calm weather, just when you think you are out of danger, an enormous wave will come surging along with lofty curling crest and crash down in your boat. The navigator of these wicked waters need never complain of boredom.

Meantime, while we were waiting for the weather to abate its violence, my gallant crew were listening to the yarns of the oldest inhabitants of the *barrio*, tales of storm and shipwreck, tales of human bodies being washed ashore. According to these venerable longshoremen, the coast of Luzon is thickly littered with the corpses and dried bones of drowned sailors. . . . My Philippino mariners must have decided that they were not born to be drowned, for I awoke one stormy morning in the misty dawn to find that I was alone. My gallant crew had faded out and I never saw them again.

This was serious. I was stranded. I was marooned by those white-livered rascals. What the deuce was to be done about it? With honeyed-tongue, with promises of high pay and heaven-knows-what, I endeavoured to inveigle some of the *barrio*

fishermen to come aboard with me and help to navigate the boat as far as San Vicente—where I knew I could get a Negrito crew. But there was nothing doing. With bulging eyes and mottled countenances, they absolutely refused. I suppose they thought my outfit was a kind of suicide-club. I don't know what would have happened, had it not been decided by Fate—which is usually kindest to me when things look black—that an old friend of mine should happen along and find me in this plight. He was an old, old hand in the Philippines, the sort of chap who seems to be able to do anything. By some personal miracle he raked together a crew for me and we made San Vicente about three o'clock on the following afternoon, after a trip in which nothing worse happened than being half-drowned by a couple of "combers" that nearly filled the boat with water and soaked all my perishable stores.

However, I had arrived at the headquarters of the Negritos and felt that my worst troubles were over. But I soon learned that they were only just beginning.

Although they had squeezed me for an exorbitant wage for the trip—and Philippine sailors would be dear at seven for sixpence—I gladly paid off the crew and entered into negotiations to hire Negritos in their place. The preliminaries occupied several days, which I spent visiting the chief Negrito village—Punta Verdi.

Probably the first thing that strikes the visitor is the Negrito's uncanny marksmanship with bow

and arrow—which he uses to catch fish, instead of line or net, among other things. Even when you witness this feat, it appears incredible. Indeed, it is all over so quickly that you can hardly see anything at all. There is a glimpse of a fish, darting here and there in the water. *Twang!* And it is transfixed by an arrow. The pygmy does not appear to take aim, and he seems to hold his bow carelessly. But his eye is unerring, and the hand follows automatically. It is the rarest thing in the world for him to miss.

I wanted to buy a couple of chickens one morning. The birds were running around, pecking and scraping, and the Negrito-owner asked me to choose which I would like to have. With a casual glance at them, the little black fellow picked up his bow and arrows.

Twang! Twang!

A couple of arrows leaped from the bow-string. And each of those birds, literally, got it in the neck—shot clean through the gizzard. My little man explained that that was the Negrito method of killing chickens, so as not to injure the body. The marksmanship was superb, though not so wonderful as the trick of shooting fish in the water.

One afternoon, I accompanied a party of the pygmies on an organised fishing expedition on the beach. Men, women, and boys all waded into the sea, in a line—the tallest of those queer little fellows leading, the boys in rear in the shallower water. When the leading file was about waist-deep he did a right-turn; the remainder followed his example,



A FIVE-LEGGED BUFFALO IN THE BORNEO RICE-FIELDS

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and the whole line proceeded to comb the sea. Their slow, cautious movements hardly raise a ripple. You can't be sure that those black shadows on the water are moving at all. Their bows are poised, ready to shoot at the first silvery streak of a fish. Behind them come the women, carrying their fish-baskets of *palma-brava* leaf. There is dead silence everywhere along the line, except for the *twang!* of bow-strings, and the *plop!* of arrows. The archers move on, eyes fixed intently on the water. The women pick up the fish and drop them in their baskets, withdrawing the arrows and replacing them in the quivers worn on the men's backs.

In two hours they had shot 200 pounds of fish.

There followed a communal share-out. The whole catch was piled on the beach in a great dump and the women divided it between them—each being allotted a share in accordance with the needs of her family. I noticed, by the way, that it was only the Negrito boys of tender years who argued and boasted among themselves about the day's catch—all claiming to have shot the biggest fish. But their pygmy parents seem to regard this matter with an indifference which might be regarded as scandalous by civilised anglers with rod and line.

The Negrito uses three types of arrows. The common arrow is pointed and tipped with the wood of the *palma-brava* palm. Another, of the same shape, is covered with a reed sheaf: this must be handled with the greatest caution as it is coated with a deadly poison for which there is no antidote. From

accounts which I have heard of deaths resulting from this poison, it appears to act upon the victim in much the same way as strychnine—causing frightful paroxysms and convulsions until death ensues from exhaustion. This is the war-arrow.

For hunting game, a different poison is used. It is sufficient only to break the skin with one of these missiles for the poison to have its fatal effect. The stricken animal sinks gently down and appears to go to sleep. Death seems to be absolutely painless. It is the most humane method of killing animals that I have ever seen. Nor does this merciful poison have any ill effect upon the meat—which I have sampled on many occasions as a guest of the hospitable Negritos.

But it was time to put to sea again, and my efforts to sign on a fresh crew were, at last, rewarded. The new lot—five Negritos—were not impressive, but I comforted myself by reflecting that nothing could possibly be worse than the cowardly lubbers who deserted me at the Mission *barrio*. I was wrong!

Well, our sailing from San Vicente certainly made a noise. I have rarely heard such a dismal chorus of lamentations as our farewell from the shore. It seemed that the entire female population came down to weep and wail and gnash their teeth at the departure overseas of my five little Negritos. Afflicted by this depressing din, I had to stand about until noon while farewells were said—*fortissimo*—and while my men's advances of cash were taken over by their prudent womenfolk.

However, we cast off at last. But it was only a false start : at the first place we touched, the crew ratted. And I had to sail back to San Vicente in solitary state to try to get another one. This time, I was luckier, and the boys stuck to me : which may not be unconnected with the fact that I refused to make any advances of cash, but paid them their wages when they had earned them, and not before—not on your life.

We sailed south, and by the time we had passed Punta Escapada we had settled down into quite a happy family. I was particularly keen on an old chap called Kitan, who was a mighty fisherman. In due course you shall hear the story of one of Kitan's exploits with a seven-foot fish that nearly drowned the pair of us.

We were enjoying plenty of sport. My boys shot fish for the larder, and I bagged an occasional deer and numerous wild pigs.

The Negritos' appetite is positively astounding. They will eat twice as much as the average white man. Looking at their diminutive bodies, and then at the stack of food they will put out of sight at a meal, the whole thing looks like a conjuring trick. And at the end of a meal, they start eating fruit and seem to continue indefinitely, or until they have eaten all the fruit in sight. After a good dinner they will stroll to the nearest *palma-brava*, climb it and get on with the fruit for a couple of hours or so.

This fruit is quite good. I became so fond of it that I tried to keep a bunch at my bedside, where it

would be handy for an early fruit-breakfast. Several times I put it there at night. And always when I woke in the morning it had vanished. So I gave this idea up. I learned that if I wanted to eat *palma-brava* fruit, I had to eat it right away because it won't keep when there are Negrito boys around the place.

For three months of the year it is the Negritos' principal food—in June, July and August. Even the tiniest piccaninnies are given *palma-brava* to suck—and when these innocents swallow the fruit-stones, as they very often do, nothing seems to happen.

You will remember that one of my Negritos was Kitan, the fisherman. And I may mention, in passing, that Kitan had a son—Mayao—who was also a redoubtable fisherman and an artist with the cast-net. He needed this accomplishment badly, because he had to fish for food for his two wives, uncounted offspring, and his old father and mother—and, as I have said before, the Negritos are a hungry lot.

Now Kitan thought he knew all that there is to know about fishing—but I think he learned something from me when I gave the simple old soul a demonstration of a spoon-bait in action. And I am bound to confess that the results surprised me almost as much as poor old Kitan.

He was very glum that morning. He hadn't caught a thing. We were out in the old man's dug-out, and I was too busy taking soundings of the lagoon to bother about catching fish. Besides, the tide was wrong. For deep-sea fishing, I had observed that

fish began to bite when the tide had started to flow ; but for trolling, the best fishing-time was during the last hour or two of slack water—when the great *tanguingue* were combing the shallow channels for small fish.

When I had finished my soundings of the lagoon, I thought I should only be doing a charitable deed to try and revive old Kitan's drooped spirits : obviously that could only be done by catching a fish. Just as some men's *ennui* instantly vanishes at the sight of a pretty lady or a bottle, I knew that my glum and ancient Negrito friend would jump up and cheer at the sight of a fish. At the moment, he looked like bursting into tears, and I hated to see him so downhearted.

I dug up a spoon-bait from my fishing gear and attached it to my longest and strongest line.

" Kitan, old friend," I said, " drive this boat over the reef, as fast as you know how. Paddle, man ! Paddle like blazes ! "

Only a few feet of water covered that reef.

Seeing that something was doing in the fishing business, the old chap cheered up marvellously, and he made that mosquito-craft of ours move with a real hustle.

Sure enough, as we scooted across the shallows of the reef, I felt a strike at my line . . . and then, to poor old Kitan's utter astonishment, although he was paddling full-speed-ahead, our crazy little craft took a sickening list, righted itself, and began to go full-speed-astern.

Well, we had hooked a *tanguingue*. Some people call him a horse-mackerel. His length may be anything up to seven feet from nose to tail—and the horse-power he can develop, when he is hooked, is something to be experienced before you can believe it. Kitan's paddle was of no more use than an egg-spoon. The giant fish was hooked fast and, mad with rage, taking our cockleshell of a boat where he liked and how he liked.

This was Kitan's first experience of spoon-bait fishing. And judging from the expression of his taut and mottled features, he seemed to be thinking that it might well be his last. But after a few panicky moments, the old Negrito responded gamely to the challenge and performed tremendous feats with his paddle: keeping our bows on to the mad-dened fish as it dashed hither and thither, sometimes doubling on its tracks and darting back at us.

Those were the windy moments. If he passed under the boat before Kitan could turn her bows, it would be a case of turning-turtle. . . . But the old man's flashing paddle averted disaster time after time, taking the risks with a sportsman's reckless love of the game. I believe I cheered him once. Oh, he was great!

"Ayah!" he yelled, in savage delight, as the *tanguingue* rocketed to the surface and leaped six feet high in air—in a wild convulsive effort to shake off the spoon. The old man's face shone with the hunter's glee. He was plainly thrilled by the noble



PYGMY NEGritos OF LUZON CAN CLIMB TREES LIKE A MONKEY

These two little fellows are scared of Fred Burdett's dogs

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proportions of the fish that had caught us—or had we caught the fish?

Right up to the end the betting would have been evens. It was only Kitan's pluck and skill that kept us afloat. Our gunwale was under water once. Twice I thought we had gone. But Kitan's work with the steering paddle, and my previous experience with these extraordinarily game fish in the Sulu Sea, brought us through.

Proudly we beached our catch—a magnificent fellow, a little over seven feet from tip to tail.

It was an afternoon of truly grand sport.

Thinking it over, I have often wondered who was scared the most—Kitan, or the big fish, or myself?

We had such great sport in that camp, that I had no little difficulty in persuading my Negrito boys to move on. Surrounded by an abundance of game and fish, they seemed prepared to stay there for ever. In fact, they were getting soft, lazy and too well-fed.

They had a rude awakening before we had been afloat so very long.

We had to run outside the Barrier Reef for a few miles, and three big waves came thundering down upon us. I was steering at the time and managed to avert complete disaster, but we shipped large quantities of water, which soaked our flour, rice, and beans.

The rice was uneatable, and the Negritos were naturally dissatisfied with their food, as all I could give them was a little flour and a few beans. Three

days later they deserted. I awoke one morning to find myself alone on the beach, the boat high and dry, and the Negrito crew deuce-knows-where!

Well, what was I going to do about it?

It looked pretty hopeless.

Here I was, on a lonely stretch of beach, miles away from any living thing. And, as if to make things thoroughly nasty, we had landed at high spring tide on the afternoon before—and my heavy boat lay stranded helplessly far above the next tide's highest flow.

There is only one way to move a stranded craft like that.

I hacked some timber into the rough shape of rollers to shove under the keel, and with a pole for lever astern I prised her, inch by inch, down to the sea. That was two days of tough manual labour, and every foot down to the water's edge—where the blue sea was lapping tantalisingly—seemed more like a nautical mile. And I shouldn't like to say what I was thinking, in the meantime, about those skulking Negritos who had left me in the lurch.

It was a blissful moment, after the very last mighty shove, to feel her glide into the water buoyantly. But I was a very tired man. My hands were knocked about. Every muscle, sinew, and nerve in my body made their presence felt—by aches and twinges—every time I moved a limb. In my determination to get that boat down to sea, I had not realised the drain on my strength. And I hadn't had a square meal for days. I was very nearly

"all in"—and I began to know it. But I also knew, only too well, that I had a long way to go before I could think about rest-cures. It is no use flopping when you are alone without a single mother's son within miles of you to give a helping hand. You have to keep on or go under. Solitary man, on these exploring jobs, very often has to be a sort of superman as a part of his ordinary day's work.

Day was just breaking. Tired as I was, I had started work as usual, just before dawn. I waded alongside my boat and hoisted myself aboard. My plan was to sail single-handed until . . . well, until something turned up, I suppose. But I had a notion of running my old craft back to the river, to the camp of an old Philippino named Hilario. We had passed it on the way and I had had the luck to do old Hilario a good turn, though not much of a one. He had a woman in his camp, half-dead with malaria, and I had stayed a while and dosed her with quinine.

I was really feeling pretty bad when I started to hoist sail. I rather wondered whether that was a real human voice I heard, somebody giving me a shout from the beach. And then I thought of the old words . . . *cast your bread upon the waters* . . .

The voice was real enough. It was a young Negrito with a message from Hilario. My old Philippino friend had seen my fellows making their way back alone and guessed I had been marooned.

Here was Hilario's man. I can see his friendly grin now. And behind him came two others, bringing

cooking-rice and chickens and God-knows-what. . . . I watched them light a fire, as the sun came beaming out of the horizon in the east.

Man is a gregarious animal. I beamed on the jolly little pygmies. Noble fellows! I inhaled the aromatic fumes of burning brushwood. There was a fat chicken on the spit, and vegetables—real vegetables—in the pot. Well, I have said a good deal about the phenomenal appetite of the Negritos: and I think that my attack on Hilario's breakfast, that morning, also deserves honourable mention.

Afterwards, with one of the boys steering, I lay back in the old tub with my pipe well alight, quite convinced that this is not such a bad old world after all. With a fair wind, we simply bowled along and beached the boat early the next morning close to Hilario's shack. If I had been that old Philippino's long-lost son, he couldn't have been more delighted to see me. I thought he was never going to leave off shaking hands. A stout fellow, old Hilario—one of Nature's gentlemen in the rough.

He insisted upon provisioning me for my trip back to San Vicente with rice, sweet potatoes and chickens; and in return I presented him with the contents of my medicine-chest, for the poor woman who, by the way, was mending finely. Hilario's gratitude was deep and sincere. Some people might have thought it extravagant . . . folk who don't know what it is to fall sick in the jungle with a deadly malady.

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I arrived safely at San Vicente about a fortnight later—after a three-months' expedition in search of an orchid which I had not clapped eyes upon. I had not seen a thing of any value.

Such is the life of an orchid-hunter, when his luck's out.

CHAPTER IV

THE PORT OF SAN VICENTE

THE Port of San Vicente is the sole haven for vessels on the north-east coast of Luzon. Nowhere else can the sailor find safe anchorage and shelter from the typhoons which, forming in the Pacific, sweep round the north-east point of Luzon and rush with devastating violence between Luzon and Formosa into the China Sea. This beautiful little seaport is almost land-locked. On the north and east it is protected by the island of Palau, on which stands the finest lighthouse in the Philippines. The island of Fuga Moros is on the west ; and to the south, San Vicente is sheltered by the mainland. Indeed, so safe is this little harbour that when the typhoon is approaching, vessels in the Cagayan River at Aparri often steam the thirty-odd miles up the coast to reach it.

It was here—during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904—that four Russian gunboats neatly gave the slip to the victorious Japanese Fleet who were flushed with triumph after a successful general action and “out for blood.” The Russians slipped into San Vicente, where they lay “doggo” for a while. Then they crept out to sea, and running round Cape

Engano steamed south down the east coast of Luzon, and passing through the San Bernandine Channel, finally reached Manila in safety—to the great disgust of the pursuing Japs.

Since that affair, Japanese naval authorities have paid close attention to the north and east coast of Luzon. Everywhere I have been in those waters, I have either seen them or heard of them. I have seen them with small motor-ships, carrying divers: some naked and some fully equipped with diving gear. They were supposed to be searching for trochas and caracoles; but with what degree of success nobody ever appeared to know. It was all rather mysterious. But one fact emerges very clearly from these strange Japanese voyagings: no enemy ships will ever escape the Japanese Navy again in the tricky waters around Luzon.

During recent years they have explored every tiny cove and inlet throughout the Batan and Babuyan Islands. There is not a possible landing-place which they have not reconnoitred between Dirique Cove, on the north-west point of Luzon, to Lenagu Cove on eastern Luzon. This work has been done very thoroughly and methodically, notwithstanding the devastating typhoons, *nortadas*, and dreaded north-east gales that wrack this great stretch of coast.

The great gatherings of the Negritos are found at San Vicente, and there are rarely fewer than five hundred pygmies in the immediate vicinity. Though the great influenza epidemic of 1918 cut swathes

through them, their numbers soon seemed to be as great as ever.

The Negritos are polygamous, usually having two or three wives and numerous progeny, and they live together in groups of not more than three families. It is rare sight, when travelling down the coast, to see more than three *humpeys* (Negrito huts) built together, although you may encounter groups of fifty or sixty pygmies on the move. In nomadic propensities they resemble the aboriginals of Australia. To-day, there may be twenty camped beside you and willing to fish and hunt and make themselves generally useful. To-morrow, they have gone. And you know they won't come back—until they get rice-hungry again.

It is a curious fact that the pygmy Negritos are interested in education! I was repeatedly asked by them if the authorities in Manila could not start schools at San Vicente. I note the question here for what it may be worth. Perhaps some educational expert might look into it, but this is a matter right off the line of country of this orchid-hunter!

After exploring the Island of Palaui, I decided to make a start for the Goton River, which is just west of Escapada, and there await a favourable opportunity to sail around this rugged danger-point of the coast. I engaged a Negrito crew of four men, and they wanted to bring their families along. I was not averse to this idea. It seemed to me that they were, perhaps, less likely to desert if we travelled *en famille*.

But a Spanish friend, to whom I mentioned the matter, begged me to forget it. He said that my modest craft could never carry enough grub to satisfy the inner cravings of four Negrito families. "My dear fellow," he said, "they would eat everything you possess. They are not human beings—they are damned locusts!"

So, after all, there were no wives and families on this trip.

For this, I think that one, at least, of my crew was thankful. I am afraid he was a gay dog. In fact, I know he was. Before we had been under weigh half an hour, before the crocodile tears had properly dried on his little stub of a nose—for he wept copiously at parting from his wife—the villain produced a feminine comb of much ornamentation, which he had secreted in his wool, and I gathered from his gleeful remarks that it was intended as a present for a dusky damsel named Daria who resided on the mainland, in a camp that lay on our route.

His earnest suggestions that I should visit the vicinity of this Negrito camp, his glowing descriptions of the adjacent country as a kind of El Dorado for an orchid-hunter, were of such persuasive eloquence as to have been worthy of a better cause. But I turned them all down flat. Lothario of the Negritos was bitterly chagrined, and his naughty Daria never saw that beautiful tortoise-shell comb—not so far as I know, anyway.

Looking at this ugly little squirt of a man, as I

lay back in the stern of my Ilocano boat, I thought how one touch of nature makes the whole world kin. After all, he wasn't so very different from the matrimonial backsliders who keep civilisation's divorce courts busy in London, Paris and New York.

I only wish I could add that my righteous refusal to play Uncle Pandarus to the Negrito lovers met with the reward attributed to virtue. But, as a matter of fact, the net result was another disaster at sea. If I had gone ashore to that Negrito camp on the mainland, instead of sternly keeping on my course to Goton, we should have missed a tremendous swell that was running outside the Barrier Reef—we glimpsed it presently through an opening of the reef in front of Goton River.

Vast "combers" were rolling in from the Pacific, seeming to mock our insignificant craft with their sullen roar. My Negritos' voluble chatter ceased. They were watching the heavy seas with a tense expression on their faces, rowing mechanically. They were thinking as I was, perhaps, that a halt at Daria's camp—which we had passed, long ago—might have been . . . But it was no use worrying about what might-have-been. There was nothing else for it but to pull into the Goton River and tie up for the night.

We found a little village boasting several good shacks where a few Philippinos were cutting firewood. They were polite and communicative—much too communicative. They told my crew the old, old

story of shipwreck, while the huge Pacific "combers" roared outside the reef; and when I awoke in the morning it was to discover—once again—that my Negrito mariners had deserted to a man, and left me in the lurch.

That was the last straw, and it finally convinced me that maritime adventure is not the Negrito's long suit. I struggled back somehow to San Vicente; and my clearest recollection of that abortive trip was the view of Point Escapada as we rounded it cautiously, at low tide. It is a wicked place for any craft to bump up against. The sharp jagged points of limestone menace the steersman—picture him, glued to the tiller!—like dragon's teeth. Any craft with its crew, hurled against those fearsome rocks by a Pacific "comber," would be impaled and torn to pieces in a few seconds. I looked at it fixedly as we passed, in dead silence, remembering the sullen roaring of mighty seas outside the Barrier Reef. It was one of those moments when a man's imagination makes itself felt somewhere deep down in his bowels.

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Yachtsmen of elegant tastes and immaculate appearance will find nothing to amuse them in these wicked waters, where the sailor-man, in his primitive *viray*, has to play a rough game of catch-as-catch-can with monsoon and tide-rips.

Returning from Aparri shortly afterwards, I was again imprisoned in Missionary Station by foul weather. A howling tempest chased us into the *barrio*. Lashed by the wind, foaming rollers pursued

us with a hissing roar—and we got in by the skin of our teeth. We had a load of rice aboard and kit galore: with the wind whistling in our teeth, we worked like Trojans and carried our stuff to a vacant shack farther up the river, where a big *viray* was loading lumber for Vigan.

Here we took up our quarters for the night, though it seemed doubtful if the roof would hold until the morning. The wind was terrific, howling like ten thousand demons and madly shaking our crazy shack. Half a dozen times that night I really thought the roof would go. . . . Luckily, by the light of my flash-lamp, I discovered a good supply of *bejuco*—a kind of pliable reed used for plaiting and binding—and we lashed the roof down to the inner beams of the walls.

When day broke, our flimsy dwelling was miraculously all in one piece. I went out, leaning on the wind as it roared past my ears. It was a wild scene.

Tremendous seas were breaking and running across the sand-spit—where the shack stood—and levelling it with the river. A little farther to the west the ground had a solid limestone formation: but it had never occurred to the Mission fishermen to build their crazy shacks on that—maybe, because they might have had to carry the materials a little farther. Uneasily, I recalled the adage of the man who built his house on shifting sands.

I walked along the spit, smothered by spindrift and driving rain, and anxiously watched the rising tide. On arriving at the mouth of the river I found

that the flood-water was working busily—cutting an ever-widening channel through the sand : it was already nearly half as wide again as when we had entered it. We spent the rest of the morning shoring up our shack and stopping leaks where the rain was coming in and getting at our rice. It was very necessary work, of course, but it also served another useful purpose : while my men were busy, they were not thinking too much about what might happen when we put to sea again. . . .

I took a stroll along the beach to have another look at the old bone-yard I had seen before. I found a new assortment of human bones, including no fewer than seven skulls. One—with a big green patch on the top of his cranium—had a remarkably fine set of teeth and greeted me with a much more friendly grin than I had yet received from anybody else on the *barrio*. As a token of my appreciation of his urbanity, I picked him up from where he was lying, and placed him a little higher up the beach where the waves could not disturb him. I didn't like to see that friendly old skull being rolled and bowled all over the shop like a cocoa-nut at a fair : it seemed disrespectful.

Some of the skulls were badly battered, splintered and broken, while others were in fair condition. I have often wondered where they all came from. Were they the remains of drowned sailors who had lost their lives in trying to cross the bar ? That was likely enough, for if ever there was a potential grave for mariners, that was one. . . . Or had they drifted

down from the ancient cemeteries at Aparri? No matter what their origin, it seemed that destiny had decided that those poor bones were not to rest in peace.

For ten days I paced that beach, waiting for the sea to moderate so that we could venture out and cross the bar. One morning I decided to tackle it at high water.

The first member of my crew to whom I mentioned the matter, quietly collected his belongings and departed hence. He did not even wait to collect the few pesos due to him. I don't know where he went—but it was somewhere on dry land. It was evident that further adventures afloat did not appeal to him.

Well, I thought it over and I reckoned that my old Negrito would be game anyway. Between us, we could manage the boat and the sail. He left for San Vicente, by land. Indeed, he had departed before I could mention the project. I suppose he had seen his friend packing up, and feared the worst.

Apparently, he also had tired of a seafaring life.

However, after many more days of tiresome waiting in this lugubrious bone-yard, I succeeded in persuading two Christianos to sail with me to San Vicente. I had to agree to pay the rascals the most extortionate rates, but it had to be done.

We embarked our stores, and tackled the bar—once more.

When we had crossed it, our boat was more than half-full of water—and I think the hearts of some of us were in our boots. Meantime, I had registered a vow never again to be caught in that miserable fishing-village—that abode of chicken-hearted loafers and dead men's bones.

Presently the wind dropped and we had to start rowing. I wasn't sorry. Rowing that old tub was a back-breaking job, and I decided to make my two Christianos earn all the money they had demanded.

“Put your backs into it, my lads!” I cried heartily, and settled down comfortably to enjoy a pipe. Also, I enjoyed a full and uninterrupted view of their scowling faces as they tugged at their oars. I was quite sorry when the breeze freshened, but it veered round dead against us and we could make no progress at all. I was reluctantly compelled to turn and run into the Gataran River.

There was a nasty sea breaking on the bar again, and we had to bale for dear life. Once more my rice was soaked; but as soon as we were ashore I opened out the sacks and dried them in the warm afternoon sun.

During the evening the wind freshened strongly: by midnight it was blowing great guns again. We had to tie up for five days and nights before I dared to risk taking to the sea again. We had another tremendous ducking crossing the bar, but we made the open sea at last and ran up to Port San Vicente without further misadventure.

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I spent some time looking over the button-shell grounds in the vicinity of San Vicente, accompanied by two old Negritos and their families, who used the old *barquillo* for sea-fishing and transportation. I came into very close contact with the family-life of these genial little people—easy-going, happy-go-lucky, jolly little chaps, who knew every hole and corner of Palaui, where there was plenty of opportunity for them to earn good money.

They could make more than a comfortable living by diving for shell on the innumerable reefs which surround the island, but they will work only when they feel inclined—which isn't too often.

While a Negrito has a little rice left in his store, he says: "Why work?" Not until the family store is empty will he saunter out after a job.

And no tender-hearted industrialist at home need lie awake o' nights for fear the wicked white man is exploiting the little Negrito with over-work and all that sort of thing. These little men will do an hour or so of work—a reasonable spot of work, according to their lights—in the morning. Then they knock off for dinner—eating as much as three ordinary men, apiece—and curl up for a sleep under a shady tree until sundown.

Occasionally they take a morning off for fishing. Their special *bonne bouche* is a big red eel with horrible red eyes, but it is a dish I have never tackled: the look of it is enough for me.

The Negritos think of work in terms of food, and you cannot get them to look at it in any other way.

"If we have enough to eat," they will say, smilingly, "why worry?"

They never thought about the future at all. Maybe their philosophy is founded on the letter, if not the spirit, of the admonition of Matthew—"Take no thought of the morrow . . ." If a period of foul weather and enforced idleness found them with an empty larder—well, it did, and that was all there was about it. Hoping for better luck next time, the little Negrito tightens his belt and waits until the clouds roll by.

I have tried to reason with them. I have talked to them about thrift—and known all the time that I might as well talk to my dog about logarithms. Their invariable reply, freely translated, is: Sufficient for the day is the plenty thereof: let to-morrow go hang.

They simply don't know what you mean by "savings": they call it hoarding, and a Negrito custom negatives hoarding in a peremptory manner. If it is known that a Negrito has a store of food, his friends and relatives come and stay with him until it is comfortably eaten. I know this to be a fact.

My fellows at Palaui grew fat and lazy. When our job was over, and we returned to the main camp, they had hardly any rice. I asked them what they were going to do about it. And they just smiled. Somebody else would have rice, if they had none.

The Negritos have trails running across the island of Palaui in all directions. I met them wherever I

went. When I shifted camp from one bay to another we would hardly get our *palma-brava* shelters fixed before the Negritos would come trickling in—smiling, rice-hungry but happy—crowds of them. These were the friends and relatives of the men who were working for me. If Uncle Jack and Cousin Tom were earning plenty of rice from the rich white *Apo*, all their sisters and cousins and aunts and uncles and pals would come along and help them to eat it. And so they did—so effectually, indeed, that no matter how much my Negritos earned there was nothing left over. The *modus operandi* of the Negrito is to clean up everything on sight. Not even the locusts have anything on him. In the matter of grub, I am not sure that the locusts could beat the Negritos to it.

I understood, now, why a Negrito is a nomad. He has to keep moving—either to be in at death at a raid on some other Negrito's food, or to keep a meal ahead of the fellows chasing him. The moment he settles down, the others are upon him, like a swarm of locusts, and eat him out of house and home.

So little is known of these people that I suppose it has never occurred to anybody in authority that something might be done to improve their lot. I know them so well—with all their good qualities and their little failings—that I feel a deep interest in their welfare. Some, at least, of their afflictions might be remedied if the Government bestirred itself.

Medical treatment is one of the things most eminently desirable.

The Negrito diet includes hardly any vegetables, and this is responsible for the ravages of a dreadful skin-disease with which the children are affected. During my four months' sojourn among the Negritos I never saw a Negrito child that was not smothered with sores and warty excrescences. Some were so sadly affected that they could hardly walk. That is a terrible statement of fact. I could never understand, however, why the parents and the elder children of from ten years of age upwards, seemed clean of this disease. But it is shocking to think of the sufferings of those helpless babies until they outgrow their affliction.

I should like to see the establishment of a children's hospital, and an elementary school—the Negritos have often expressed to me their desire for education, and they could be trained in the simple cultivation of vegetables. In this way, wonders have already been accomplished with another tribe, the Tirurays, and I believe a similar experiment with the Negritos would bear excellent fruit.

The younger generation would respond with keen interest.

I know a Negrito woman in Aparri who is a shining example of what can be done by "catching them young." By education and environment she has graduated from a savage to an intelligent accomplished woman. She speaks perfect English and has travelled twice to the United States. She is the type of woman who would make an ideal matron and interpreter for welfare work among the Negritos.

I should feel very happy if these jottings of mine on the sufferings of the Negrito children in north-east Luzon resulted in some beneficent work being attempted by the kind-hearted people of Manila.

A kindly Spanish Governor seems to have attempted something of the kind so long ago as the year 1846, but nothing resulted, so far as I can discover. There are, I am sure, kindly men in the present administration who, if they gave the matter serious thought, would agree with that Spanish gentleman and feel an urge to get something done—for humanity's sake.

I will quote from the Decree of the Governor. It is dated June, 1846 :

In my visits to the provinces of these islands, having noticed with the sympathy they must inspire in all sensitive souls the kind of life and the privations that many of the infidel tribes, and especially the Negritos who inhabit the mountains, are forced to endure, and persuaded that it is the duty of all civilised governments and of humanity itself to better the condition of men who, hidden thus from Society, will in time become extinct, victims of their customs, of the unhealthfulness of the rugged places where they live, and of our negligence in helping them, and desirous of making them useful, I decree . . .

The Decree then ordered assistance to be given in supplying seeds, grain, and vegetables ; for their protection from molestation by war or exploitation

in peace. "No one," this Spaniard said, "is to enter into a contract with a Negrito without competent authorisation, and all contracts are to be registered."

This document was evidently drawn up by a humane Governor, but its execution was probably left to provincial officials—with the usual result.

The only way these little people can get any benefit from Government assistance is by a scheme similar to the Australian Government's plan with the Australian Negritos.

Australia appointed a District Protector of Aborigines who is a Justice of the Peace. This enables him to ensure that justice is done on the spot, without delay, in all cases affecting the welfare of the people in his charge.

How the pygmy Negritos of Luzon can—and do—execute rough justice is well illustrated by this story of their reprisals upon a band of Kalinassan head-hunters.

Returning from an unsuccessful expedition, a party of young bucks of the Kalinassans espied a happy little group of Negrito women playing with their children by a river. The head-hunters, who were returning to their village without a single trophy, called a halt and planned the massacre of the Negritos—boasting that they would take the heads of every woman and child and carry them home on the tops of their spears. An Igorote elder, who was with them, did not like this plan and tried to dissuade them, but without avail.

The Kalinassan bucks crawled through the foot-hill bush toward their unsuspecting victims—and then broke cover, with savage yells, brandishing their spears and dreaded head-axes. There was a shambles on the river-bank, from which only one young Negrito escaped in the confusion. The swiftest runners of the Kalinassans gave chase, but the terrified lad—one can imagine how horror lent him wings in that wild headlong flight—got clean away and carried his news to the Negrito men, who were hunting only a few miles away.

Meantime, the head-hunters unwisely remained on the bank of the river to gloat and feast over the headless bodies. One of them brought in a wild pig, and they lit a fire and roasted it. Dusk was falling as they squatted around the fire, gnawing their meat. Older warriors of the Igorotes would not have been such fools as to remain on the scene of a massacre. But these were all young men with a fine conceit of themselves and an insolent contempt for the pygmies.

The dusk of evening deepened and the flames of the fire flickered redly. The figures of the Igorotes were silhouetted clearly against the fire-light, as they squatted on their hunkers and gorged. Every man of them was a barn-door target to the silent-footed Negrito bowmen lurking in the foot-hill bush—the avengers!

A poisoned arrow transfixed the muscular throat of one of the ugly brutes. Another was shot in the spine. Soon, the space around the glowing fire was



A TWELVE-FOOT HAMA-DRYAD, OR KING COBRA
He has just reared up and is about to strike

PUBLIC LIBRARY,
SOUTHFIELDS,

filled by contorted bodies of the wounded—writhing with twisted limbs and screaming as the poison of the Negrito war-arrows slowly tormented them to death. And all the while, somewhere in the darkness there was the monotonous and deathly twanging of bow-strings. Blinded by the glare of their own fire, mad with fear and rage, the head-hunters were helpless. One by one they went down, clawing at the bloody feathers of the arrows that penetrated their flesh. Looking up in their death-agonies, they would see the severed heads which they had set out in a row on the rocks, the dying fire-light playing on sightless eyes and matted hair. . . . It was a grisly token of what was coming to *them* !

When not a man of the Kalinassans was left standing, the pygmies came grimly out from the black shadows of the trees and bush, to inflict the final penalty—not eye for an eye, and tooth for a tooth, but head for a head. . . . Every one of those sprawling head-hunters, dead and dying, was seized by the hair and crudely decapitated by the little men.

Reverently, they interred the dead women and children of their race in a cairn of heavy stones beneath the huge branches of a *belati* tree. And above the tomb of those innocents, the Negritos strung up the gory heads of the head-hunters—as children's toys are hung upon a Christmas-tree—as a warning to whomsoever it might concern. They left the uncovered corpses sprawled around the

embers of the fire, amid the remnants of their last meal, transfixed by the Negrito war-arrows, to tell their own story.

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A few days later, another band of Kalinassans, ranging along the riverside, beheld that gruesome spectacle. Never again were the pygmy Negritos molested in the land of the head-hunters.

In conversation with me, Godaran himself—a noted head-hunter of Luzon, chieftain of the Kalinassan tribe of the Igorotes—confirmed this story of the Negritos' vengeance.

The agonising death inflicted by the poisoned war-arrows of the pygmies is one of the horror-stories of the jungle. The most callous brute will shiver at the thought of it. It isn't fighting. It is certain death, murder if you like, if only the skin is broken. A scratch from the keen barb of a Negrito arrow was inevitably followed by convulsions, torture, and death. The expressions on the faces of the Igorote dead were sufficiently eloquent to cool the courage of the head-hunters, fierce and warlike as they are.

Godaran, the head-hunters' chief, took a strange and very friendly interest in me. We had many long talks together. I met him during the inter-tribal wars between his people and the Apayaos, and took part in the unique conference at Bangui, which settled their differences. Besides Godaran and myself, there were present Señor Rafael Delgado—the President—the commander of the Ilocano Philippine

Constabulary, and the Treasurer of the Province. But the full story of that exciting day, and the events leading up to it, belong to a later chapter of my journeys in Luzon.

CHAPTER V

THE IGOROTE HEAD-HUNTERS OF LUZON

IN these days, head-hunting by the Igorote tribes is almost a thing of the past, but I can remember the time when their national sport was in full swing: and I honestly believe there are a few head-hunters in Luzon to-day who haven't forgotten the time when they hunted me, although it happened twenty-five years ago. I don't carry sticks of dynamite about with me for nothing.

The Igorotes are, with very few exceptions, finely developed and courageous men. The American Government of the Philippines freely enlist them for service in the Constabulary, and they make good troops. But at the time my adventure happened, they were running wild, and their very name was dreaded.

I had been killing two birds with one stone in Luzon: in the first instance, looking over the reported asbestos deposits in Ilocos Norte, and investigating a very promising field of the beautiful *La Mariposa*—or *Phalæanopsis*—orchid which is so widely scattered from north to south of the Philippine Islands.

While hunting, north of Bangui, Ilocos Norte, I encountered a tribe of the head-hunters—the Apayao. I cannot say I was at all pleased to see them, though they seemed civil enough and talkative. They displayed the keenest interest and curiosity in what I was doing in Luzon, and told me a marvellous story all about minerals and orchids to be found at the head of the river.

All my old scouting instincts were aroused. I pressed the Apayao for details and soon felt convinced that there was something in their story—enough, anyway, to justify a reconnaissance of the ground. It seemed likely enough that there might be mineral riches in the upper reaches of the river, and the idea attracted me. There was, however, one big black fly in the jam: this presumed El Dorado happened to be situated in the territory of the Kalinassan tribe of Igorotes, who had the deserved reputation of being the vilest gang of head-hunters in all Luzon.

I decided to risk it, but chose my comrades with more than usual care, and engaged a tough quartet of ex-soldiers of the Constabulary, whom I armed with Winchester rifles and Winchester repeating shot-guns. For myself, I had my heavy Mauser automatic. And the Burdett-arsenal, for this trip, included twenty-five sticks of dynamite with detonators and fuses.

Thus, we set out to explore the highlands at the head of the river where the Kalinassans might well be waiting, agog with pleasurable anticipation,

to add our heads to their collection—just as I collect minerals and orchids.

Everything went off quietly and well, on the journey up the river, and we had reached our objective before things began to happen.

One of the stories I had heard—and taken with a pinch of salt—was about a wall of solid gold with a big black snake on it. When one of the Apayaos who accompanied me on the trip said he would guide me to it, I thought it would be interesting to get an explanation of the yarn.

When we reached the locality where this sight was to be seen, I was naturally anxious to look it over, and pushed on ahead of the main party with a couple of Apayao scouts. For about two hours we followed the course of the river until, rounding a sweeping bend, I saw the Golden Wall of the Black Snake—a great dyke that glittered in the afternoon sun like a mass of burnished gold.

“Gold!” cried the scouts—and I knew they were enjoying my undisguised astonishment. Viewing that huge mass of scintillating mineral I believe I had almost begun to think I had found the greatest gold-mine in the world—but I knew, of course, that gold in the natural state never looked like that. And high up, a huge black band straggled across its shining face. From the respectful distance where my scouts had halted—and they wouldn’t budge a foot nearer—it certainly looked as if the shape of an enormous python lay there.

I had to make my investigations alone and dis-

covered—as I expected—arsenical pyrites of very little commercial value. The “Black Snake” was a lode of sulphide: it assayed high in gold, copper, and silver, but the obvious difficulties of transportation precluded any possibility of working it—an obstacle which has negatived many otherwise valuable discoveries I have made. Old Dame Nature has an exasperating trick of showing her priceless treasures to the explorer from the other side of an impassable barrier.

After I had taken specimens of the sulphide, we set out upon our return journey to Banguì. That night, we camped by the river at the foot of a precipitous slope topped with boulders; it was characteristic of the country thereabouts, where the bed of the river narrows into rocky gorges—of which the “Golden Wall of the Black Snake” was an example.

I dragged my camp-bed under an overhanging ledge for protection from a drenching dew, and relaxed my tired limbs; it had been a hard day and I was comfortably drowsy. The Apayao scouts were fishing for prawns, by the light of flares—and it began to dawn upon me that those tongues of flame in the darkness of a hostile country were a huge mistake. I had almost forgotten that we were in the territory of the Kalinassan head-hunters. I had made an error of judgment, too, in siting the camp—it was all wrong, commanded by that towering unclimbable slope, whose rocky crest cut raggedly across the sky.

Even as the belated thought occurred to me, it seemed that a devastating landslide loosed its fury upon us. Huge boulders thundered down from the crest, crashing from point to point and plunging into the river—one bounced from the rocky ledge above me, in a dizzy ricochet.

The Kalinassan head-hunters were attacking us from the top of the gorge, yelling defiance and sending boulders whizzing over the edge. My prawn-fishers were scared stiff. By a miracle none of them had been hit—yet. They flung their hissing flares into the river. We were in pitch darkness, flattened against the side of the sheer slope, which was our only hope of escaping the murderous trajectory of the head-hunters' missiles, but the odds were all against us. Unless something were done to stop that downfall of rocks, it was only a matter of time before they smashed us and descended to collect our heads—at their own sweet leisure.

There was no novelty about this strategic situation—it is probably familiar to any man who has fought savages. Tribesmen will confidently harry even disciplined regular troops, if they hold a commanding ridge, high up, with an open line of retreat in rear. Get on their flank or behind them, with rapid fire, and all the fight is taken out of them.

With my ex-Constabulary toughs, I worked my way down the river-bank until we were clear of the flying rocks and well out to the left flank of the Kalinassan position. Then we began to climb upward. It was too dark for the head-hunters to

see us, and they were too intent on pelting that narrow strip of the bank below, to think of anything else. Presently, however, we could see them—black bobbing heads that showed the grotesque shape of their Igorote head-dresses—and we could hear their voices plainly.

Then they heard the sharp cracking voices of our Winchester rifles and the peevish whine of high-velocity bullets spurting among them. That sudden enfilading fire must have been a very nasty experience. They liked it so little that in a few seconds there was not one Kalinassan to be seen or heard. Their get-away was a giddy panic.

I plumed myself on the success of my *ruse de guerre*—somewhat prematurely, as it happened—and made a feeble jape :

“The head-hunters,” I said, “have lost their heads.”

But they were still after ours.

They trailed us, but just kept out of reach, right along the river—waiting their opportunity.

My carriers were thoroughly scared, more than half-demoralised, and I began to anticipate serious trouble.

They shuffled along, staring backwards at the trail behind them. Everything that moved in the undergrowth, every tuft that stirred on a wooded hill-side, was a head-hunter. They imagined the *pad-pad* of pursuing feet in every sound, and the frond of every distant tree was an Igorote head-dress. Again and again I heard their low hoarse cry :

“ Señor ! Señor ! The Kalinassans ! ”

“ Where ? ”

“ Over there, Señor ! ”

When I turned round to look, I could see nothing. We tramped onward. Ahead was a narrow gully through which we must pass, and I began to think—hard. Then I let my carriers go on ahead for a while, and used my old scout’s eyes—scouring the trail behind us.

My men were right. Their eyes had been sharper than mine. I saw a head-dress flit from bush to bush. And I saw a glint of head-axe or a spear.

That was enough. I raced ahead to the gully where a huge boulder had tumbled down from the mountain-side, lodging at the side of the river. The head-hunters must pass through here, as they hung on our trail.

“ Antonio ! ” I shouted to my head-boy, and taking care that all the carriers heard me. “ Antonio, when the Kalinassans come to this rock ”—I touched it with my hand—“ they will come no further ! ”

I intended to give those head-hunters a colourable imitation of hell with the lid off . . . and I did it.

I took six plugs of dynamite, with caps and fuse, and climbed up on the rock. I didn’t care a hoot if the Kalinassans could see me : they wouldn’t understand what I was at. There was a convenient hollow in the centre. I fixed primer and detonator and about eighteen inches of fuse—finishing the job off in a neat and workmanlike manner, just as

a big party of Kalinassan warriors broke from cover about two hundred yards away and rushed at us.

Touching off the fuse, I jumped down from the rock and told my carriers to run for their lives.

Those fool head-hunters, with yells of triumph, dashed at the gorge. They thought they were well after us. With a quick backward glance, I could see them prancing towards the narrow bottle-neck where the ominous rock stood.

The dynamite exploded with the roar of an eighty-ton gun, which echoed and re-echoed through the mountainous gorge in a series of deafening repercussions.

It would be hard to say who were scared the most—the Kalinassan head-hunters, or my carriers, who dropped their packs and ran a mile before they could be stopped.

I went back to the scene of the great explosion. The rock was riven in four great cleavages, and I found a couple of head-axes but not a sign of anything else.

The rest of our journey was uneventful, and two of the Apayao guides detached themselves from my party—for their job was done—and quite happily went off to the river to fish. They were overconfident. The Kalinassans killed one and took his head. The other escaped and brought the news to me in Bangui.

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Not long afterwards, my travels in Luzon brought me into contact with Godaran: the headman of

the Igorotes who made peace with the Apayaos. We became great friends and he often came to see me. We let bygones be bygones—as the old saying has it. Besides, I had a reputation among the Igorotes. To this day, they look upon me with awe of a kind that induces them to eschew unfriendly feelings towards me. I don't think they ever felt really safe while I was around. Perhaps they had an uncomfortable suspicion that something else might blow up, if I touched it. They still call me the Strong Man who split Rock with his Fist.

It was Godaran who told me—to my great relief—that there were no fatal casualties among the Kalinassans in that affair of mine. I did not wish to start a blood-feud with them : I only wished them to understand that it wasn't safe to hanker after my head.

The sequel to this adventure was a solemn pact between Godaran and myself. With ancient Igorote ceremonial, I became blood-brother of the Chief of the Head-Hunters.

I bear the scar of Godaran's axe where he cut my arm and drank my blood. I will tell you the story exactly as it happened, although it will compel me to confess that Godaran's Igorote sister is my wife, and that my sister is Godaran's wife . . . that is, according to the blood-brotherhood laws of the head-hunters of Luzon.

Moreover : you shall hear, in this history of the blood-compact, how I stopped a war.

CHAPTER VI

THE BLOOD-COMPACT

ONE day, in Bangui—which, as you will remember, is on the north coast of Luzon and near the scene of my escape from the head-hunters' hot pursuit—the Chief of Police came to my house, shepherding a couple of Igorotes.

"Kalinassans," he said, introducing them. "They have brought a message for you from Godaran."

They were ugly brutes—regarding me with a fixed stare. Their eyes were set near together emphasising the flattened nose and spreading nostrils. One fellow had his mouth shut tight; his comrade gaped at me, displaying a broken tooth in the lower jaw.

I said: "Yes?"

The Police Chief nodded, and both of us retained an ambassadorial air of appropriate gravity as the message from Godaran was delivered.

"Godaran would like to meet the Strong Man who splits Rock with his Fist."

Godaran, in fact, was inviting me to a sort of party: and it required thinking over. I was thinking of the old adage which prescribes the use of a spoon with a long handle when you sup with

the devil. . . . Giving orders for the Igorotes to be well fed and allowed to rest, we walked over to the Bangui Presidente's house and asked him what he thought about it.

Señor Rafael Delgado, the President, discussed Godaran's strange invitation with Parsons, Provincial Treasurer, and Humphreys, Commander of the Ilocano Philippine Constabulary—good friends of mine who happened to turn up most opportunely as I entered the house.

"This is very interesting," said the President. "It is the first time the Kalinassans have ever made advances of the kind. This friendly attitude is something new."

In view of recent happenings in a certain mountain-gorge, I was not too sure that it was so excessively friendly. You never know. "What's their little game?" said I. And Parsons—a clever young American—turned to me with a bright idea.

"Look here, Burdett old man! Tell Godaran you'll be delighted to meet him—here! If we can get these savages in Bangui, we can talk to them. We may get them to make a blood-compact of peace with the Apayaos and stop all this inter-tribal fighting between them. It's continually going on. What about it?"

Humphreys concurred: "Parsons is right. We shall never get another chance like this."

The President glanced at me in courteous inquiry.

"Very well, gentlemen," I said. "I'll certainly send the message."

"We'll send an escort to meet them . . ." But there the conversation drifted into very businesslike "shop" and I left my official friends to organise their end of the affair.

Godaran lost no time in accepting my invitation.

He marched into Bangui on the following afternoon, at the head of his Igorote warriors.

It was an impressive spectacle of martial savagery, that oncoming half-naked host of head-hunters. They marched in a thin haze of dust that almost lent a touch of unreality to their grotesque and fearful mien, the afternoon sun tipping the blades of their six-foot spears with fire. Their faces were bestial and impassive: some were showing a white line above the iris of dilated eyes. Thrust in their girdles were the terrible head-axes that shear through neck-muscles and vertebræ like a knife going through butter.

Señor Delgado, Humphreys, Parsons, and I received them at the Presidencia, where the column halted and Godaran advanced to our group. While the interpreter was translating introductions and the usual compliments, Godaran had no eyes for anybody but me. He looked me over as if I were a horse at a fair. After a rather prolonged inspection, he turned to his head-hunters and said something at which they guffawed unpleasantly. The interpreter translated:

"This is the Strong Man who splits Rock with his Fist . . . *but he doesn't look like it!*"

I shook hands with him, smiling, but clenching

my fingers around his fist until I felt the bones of his hand move. Godaran's face remained impassive, but when I released his hand he stroked it pensively and made another remark that fetched another Igorote guffaw.

"This is the Strong Man who splits Rock with his Fist . . . *and it feels like it!*"

Neither the President nor the officials of Bangui seemed to interest Godaran: he acknowledged the introductions with a casual nod. It was quite clear that, notwithstanding explanations or expositions to the contrary, he considered Burdett was the Big Noise.

He asked me, through the interpreter, where his men were to sleep that night. I informed him that accommodation had been prepared for them in the Presidencia; but he, and any headmen whom he wished to invite, would be my guests in my house. The ice being thoroughly broken now, we seemed to be getting on famously—old Godaran and I—but when we came to the next item on the official programme, there was very nearly an ugly scene.

Humphreys politely requested the Igorotes to oblige him by kindly depositing their spears and head-axes in the temporary charge of the Ilocano Constabulary, for the period of their brief sojourn in Bangui—or, anyway, until to-morrow morning. They snarled and looked at each other: but the suspicion of a "breeze" passed and calm returned when I assured Godaran that I would be personally responsible for the safety of their weapons. He

seemed quite satisfied then, and the head-axes and spears were stacked in the Presidencia and a Constabulary guard was placed over them.

At the pow-wow in my house that night, I broached the delicate subject of a peace-treaty between the Kalinassans and the Apayaos. Oh, what a night it was! Delegates of the League of Nations at an international conference will know something of what I endured—arguing, coaxing, and explaining, every sentence having to be translated by the interpreter. I did not feel that I was cutting much ice. Godaran's interest in the project was superficial. That wicked old man persisted in regarding me as the Star Turn, from a purely personal angle. I was the Strong Man who splits Rock with his Fist. Nothing else mattered, at the moment.

His assurances of friendship towards me were not extended in any noticeable way to the Apayaos, and the peace-treaty still seemed as far away as ever when he made an astonishing suggestion: Godaran earnestly asked if I would consent to become his blood-brother, according to the ceremonial of the Igorotes!

I thought swiftly, and perceived the opening for a diplomatic *coup*.

I told the interpreter that I would certainly agree, but only upon one condition.

"What's the condition?" the interpreter inquired.

"Never mind that," I replied. "Tell him what I say."

Godaran was delighted and eagerly asked the

conditions. I could see that he was ready to promise anything.

"I will enter the blood-compact with the Chief of the Kalinassans," I said, clenching my right hand and looking at it earnestly: it was the hand that split the rock—with the undisclosed assistance of dynamite—and Godaran looked at it, too, fascinated. "But that is impossible while the Kalinassans are making war on the Apayaos and collecting their heads. As Godaran's blood-brother I should be held responsible to the Philippine authorities. There must be peace."

That was enough.

I had won.

Godaran agreed to my conditions, and I sent the news to the President—who had gracefully retired from the conference, long ago, and gone to bed.

The great pow-wow between the chiefs of the Kalinassans and the Apayaos took place a few days later in the council-chamber of the Presidencia—and never, I should say, were so many murderous villains gathered together under one roof. This senate of head-hunters is one of the travel-pictures that remain indelibly in my memory. Here were a horde of blood-letting heathen debating excitedly under the guiding influence of one or two white men. They were ranged—for safety—on separate sides of the council-chamber. They filled the benches. They squatted on the floor. They jumped to their feet and gesticulated, lips protruding and eyes ablaze. They sat inscrutable, impassive, sinis-

ter. At some phrase from a chief's heavy lips, a wave of movement would sweep over the phalanx of grim barbarians, like the wind in jungle-grass.

This went on for three days and three nights.

And then peace hove in sight.

The issue was narrowed to a matter of compensation and adjustment of claim between the tribes. I remember the point. It was this : the Kalinassans had secured eighty-one Apayao heads, but the Apayaos had added only nine Kalinassan heads to their collection. What were we going to do about that ?

There was a momentary lull in the proceedings.

Then wild uproar broke out.

An Apayao runner had come into Bangui, hot-foot, crying the murder of that Apayao scout who left my party after the dynamiting episode.

His dramatic news imperilled the whole of the three days' proceedings.

It was a grim story.

Two Apayao scouts had set their fish-traps on the river and enjoyed a heavy catch of eels. They rebaited the traps and persisted in hanging about in hostile country. I remembered how I had warned them myself—but they were cock-a-whoop over the story of the dynamite and how the Kalinassans had bolted. The Kalinassans had run away ! The Kalinassans were cowards ! And the two Apayaos felt very, very brave. There was nothing to be afraid of. They had told me so. I warned them earnestly. They wouldn't listen. All the Kalinas-

sans had run away—the Kalinassans had run away ! They repeated it with glee.

“ They are frightened,” crowed one of the scouts to me. “ They have gone. Look ! Where are they ? ” He waved an arm, airily, towards the empty landscape of river, rocks and trees.

“ Probably watching you two damned fools,” I said.

But they went back to their fish-traps.

From this point, the runner takes up the story of what happened after I had gone. He knew all about it because he was the survivor of those two.

The Kalinassans were waiting for them all right, waiting to catch them alone.

The two Apayaos, very bucked about their catch of eels, were walking along the top of a fifty-foot cliff by the river—and there, the head-hunters had got them where they wanted them. Like hounds at a kill, they streaked from the bush and rushed them—giving tongue. One of the scouts had the presence of mind to risk the only thing—he dived fifty feet into the river and got away. The other was grabbed, speared, and decapitated. His head was set on a boulder, like a butcher’s block, and split in halves with an axe.

The survivor, hidden on the opposite bank of the river, was witness of the act. When he leaped from the cliff, the head-hunters seem to have paid no more attention to him. They concentrated on the savage joy of their kill. Maybe they thought the other fellow was killed by that fifty-foot dive—



AN IGOROTE RANCHERIA

These people live at an altitude of 5,000 feet above sea-level and the men are remarkable for their splendid physical development

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and he certainly would have been a dead man if it had not happened that the water was of great depth at that point. Or, maybe, they thought they would get him later—before he could reach Bangui. Anyway, he crawled among the boulders and lay still, half-stunned by the shock of striking the water. One can imagine the horror in his eyes as he stared up at the cliff-top where he could plainly see the trapped Apayao—frenzied, doubling like a hare among many hounds, until he was speared and brought down. And then he saw them bring the severed head to the rock on the cliff-edge, and cleave it in halves.

Our runner's head, at that moment, must have felt very insecure upon his shoulders.

Now head-hunters have their code of etiquette, like anybody else. And the Igorotes have their rules of warfare. By the number of heads taken in a fight, and carried to their *rancheria* on the tops of their spears, the Igorote warrior piles the honours of a soldier thick upon himself. And the Apayaos, in this case, did not complain because the Kalinasans had gained another trophy: that was the fortune of their tribal war, and it would be their turn some other day.

But etiquette of the Igorotes demands that the head shall be taken intact. The wanton splitting of the skull of that wretched Apayao—the mutilation of the trophy—was a deadly insult.

It is unusual, and I am afraid that it was an act of revenge on the poor fellow for having acted as my

guide during the prospecting expedition into the Kalinassans' territory.

That was the story—dropped like a bomb into the midst of our peace-negotiations !

I simply do not know how we managed to restore the situation. I only know that we did it—at last—and it was finally adjudged that Godaran's men should be fined, and the Apayaos were compensated. Money did the trick, or valuables in lieu thereof. I don't remember the amount of the fine or indemnity ; but I do know that it had to be paid on the spot-cash principle—which is anathema to the Treasuries of great nations in the Western Hemisphere.

I saw the Kalinassans bring in one Igorote jar which was valued at seven thousand pesos ; its black burnished surface was decorated with bands and figures of pure gold.

The Kalinassan-Apayao Peace Treaty became an accomplished fact, solemnized by weird rites and savage ceremonial. A member of each tribe stood before a tree and chanted the terms of the treaty from beginning to end. Then they took the oath, uttered a terrifying yell, and snatched the head-axe from their girdles. With one powerful stroke they buried the head of the weapon in the tree.

I wonder if that was the ancient rite of " burying the hatchet " ?

Then came the *pièce de résistance*.

For the next item on the programme was the ceremony of the blood-compact between the Kalinas-

san Chief of the Head-hunters and a . . . somewhat uncomfortable orchid-hunter.

The rites of this Igorote ceremony were, of course, known to me.

The candidates each cut the other's flesh with a weapon, and drink the blood.

My weapon was nothing more formidable than a razor. And it was with mixed feelings that I observed my blood-brother-to-be loosening the head-axe in his girdle. My innate sporting instincts mutely protested. Fair play's a jewel, I thought, but razor *versus* head-axe seemed far too much like the Christian *versus* the lion. Besides, mine was a safety-razor. . . . However, I took out the blade and held it between finger and thumb.

Godaran smiled and offered me his muscular left arm.

I cut him where the vaccination-marks would have been, if he had any. He just glanced down at the trickle of blood, and drew his head-axe. I smiled at Godaran. Hundreds of Igorote eyes were upon me as their chief deeply gashed my arm with his war-weapon: I have the scar to this day.

The drinking of blood followed.

I just touched his arm with my lips, but the Igorote savage went to my deep cut like a leech and literally drank—sucking avidly with his heavy lips. The sensation was very odd. He told me afterwards that he drank deep of my blood to obtain some of the strength of the Strong Man who splits Rock with his Fist. . . . I think if he knew how

he had been fooled by a few sticks of dynamite, that beastly axe of his would have been at my neck instead of my arm.

The Kalinassan and Apayaos chiefs then went through the ceremony; but I noticed that they gashed the breast instead of the arm.

So far as I know, that treaty of the blood-compact has never been violated between the two tribes of Igorote head-hunters. It was understood between them that if one entered the other's territory, a herald must go in advance and proclaim the visitor's friendly greetings. I have never heard of this rule being broken.

To me, the most painful part of the ceremony was when I learned that my blood-brother's sister automatically became my wife. I have never seen the lady. And my sister—who became Godaran's wife by the same token, although she won't believe it—has never seen her Igorote husband. All things happen for the best.

CHAPTER VII

THE HIDDEN PORT OF LIMAJON, THE CHINESE PIRATE-KING

OF the Babuyan Islands—north of Luzon—Calayan is the most prosperous and thickly populated though, until comparatively recent years, it was almost unknown. And it was due to my knowledge of this outlandish little dot of a place on the map of the Philippines that I was requested to undertake a survey of Calayan and report on the possibilities of a landing-ground for aeroplanes : an offer which I promptly accepted.

If variety is, indeed, the spice of life—I thought to myself as I fitted-out for this expedition—I shall never die of *ennui*. Not orchids this time—nor magnesite rock, gold, sulphur from volcanic beds, pearls from the ocean—but aeroplanes where the ancient junks of Limajon, the Chinese pirate of olden days, were the war-hawks of their day ! In the exotic atmosphere of the East meditation becomes a habit, and there are occasions—this being one of them which I remember—when trite Latin tags scribbled in schooldays of long ago leap to the eye with real significance. *Tempora mutantur . . .* I tried to imagine the consternation of old Limajon

and his slit-eyed pig-tailed sea-wolves if a bombing 'plane had come zooming over their mast-tops !

And modern is the word to apply to my method of sea-transport on this trip to Calayan—no *viray* manned with comic sailormen from Ilocos Norte, but a raking coastguard cutter. You may wait for a month of Sundays for a steamer that deigns to call at the island. It is so far off the beaten track, hedged with coral hummocks along the coast, its creeks infested by voracious crocodiles ; and with a climate chiefly remarkable for north-east monsoons that blow for eight months of the year, and raging typhoons for the other four.

I landed on a sunny February morning. The arrival of the Coastguard vessel aroused some excitement among the inhabitants, and when I stepped ashore I was lucky enough to be greeted heartily by a man whom I had met in Manila : I will call him Enrique de la Castrella—though that is not his real name. He is a scion of one of the old rulers of the Batan Islands—which lie to the north, between Calayan and Formosa, in the Balintang Channel. Enrique and his wife—a charming and well-educated Philippino lady—dispensed open-handed hospitality to me during my stay in this remote place, and insisted upon escorting me at once to their *hacienda*.

We watched the Coastguard steamer heading for the open sea, waving to the Philippino officers on deck until they became mere indistinguishable dots.

"She's coming back for me in three months' time," I said to Enrique.

"In three months?" he replied, gazing after the little vessel. "Ah, yes . . . God willing, they will return. Señor, did you ever hear the story of the Coastguard steamer that was wrecked in the Visayas? She carried a Philippino crew, but in those days the officers were all Americans. And they were brave men, Señor. They knew how to die." Enrique paused for a moment and his dark eyes clouded. "There was a typhoon. One of the worst within living memory. It caught them off the coast. And there was no escape. The tempest swept them away. No ship's engines or steering-gear can fight the typhoon. It hurled them on the rocks and held them there, while the waves began to batter their little ship to pieces and beat the crew off the deck into the sea. There was only one survivor—the Chinese cook. He was washed ashore, stunned and bleeding, and only the merciful God knows how he escaped with his life. And he told us how the brave American officers died. While their little ship was grinding on the rocks, they hoisted their signal-flags in a last message to this world—FAREWELL.

"Perhaps—who knows?—even the storm-fiends respected the dying wish of those valiant American gentlemen to say good-bye. For when the wreck was found, those tattered signal-flags were still flying aloft—though the hull was crushed and its iron stanchions twisted like thin copper-wire."

Enrique's story was a true one, well-known in that far-off island where I have heard it from many independent sources. That last indomitable gesture in the face of certain death is surely an epic of the seas? Truly, as Enrique said, those Americans knew how to die.

* * * * *

For my three-months' sojourn in Calayan, I had come well provided—not only with necessities, but with the luxuries that count for so much in these outlying places. It was not for nothing that I had been marooned several times in the past, and I meant to turn those lessons to account. When I began to unpack my stores—which included, among other good things, a couple of sacks of coffee beans—the liquid eyes of Enrique's wife grew rounder and bigger every moment. To her, it was a priceless collection of all the things she longed for—but couldn't get, in Calayan. She nearly shed tears of gratitude for my contribution to their larder and joyfully packed the stuff in her own store-room. The Señora was a thrifty housewife, for, though my stay on the island exceeded three months, those stores of "goodies" were not exhausted and I was able, on leaving, to present her with a decent surplus.

My friend Enrique—man-like—was more interested in my tobacco and arms and explosives, and the thing that interested him most of all was my case of dynamite. I always carry dynamite on these expeditions into the wilds. In the pioneer's

war with natural obstacles there are always occasions when dynamite is the *dernier resort*.

"What are you going to do with that?" Enrique enquired.

"Oh, I don't know," I replied. "It will come in useful some day."

"If you will come with me after *tiffin*," he said eagerly, "I'll show you where it will come in useful to-day. It will be a God-send!"

Enrique rather loved secrets. He was one of those fellows who enjoy springing harmless little surprises, so I did not press for further information—though I will confess that I was rather curious to know what—or who—he wanted to blow up.

After an excellent meal, presided over by the smiling Señora, I took my shot-gun and cartridge-belt, and told Enrique—now seething with excitement—to lead on. Before we had gone far, we put up half a dozen fine jungle-pigeons, and Enrique bagged four with a right and left barrel in double-quick time. These big handsome birds of dark-green and grey plumage—*Balut* is the islanders name for them—are indigenous, I believe, to the Philippines. Enrique picked up his "bag" and, in high good humour now, led on until we came to a tidal creek where I beheld the biggest *viray* I had ever seen.

She was one of those Ilocano luggers, lashed together with rattan, but from bow to stern she must have measured eighty feet, with a tremendous beam of about twenty-five feet. In comparison with the

virays I had sailed from Ilocos Norte, she was a dreadnought. And great was Enrique's pride in her dimensions, and he explained that she was waiting to be launched.

But Enrique's super-*viray* was most obviously bottled up in that tidal creek at the river's mouth. Even if she were launched, she could never reach the open sea—which was so near and yet so far—because the fairway was blocked by several big coral hummocks.

I appreciated the situation at a glance.

"A charge of dynamite in that coral?"

Enrique gesticulated an excited assent. "Señor, would you be so kind as to dynamite those hummocks for fifty bullocks?" he said eagerly.

"No!" I shook my head, and his face fell.

"A hundred?"

"No!"

"For how much, then?" As he asked the question, Enrique threw up his hands as if he asked heaven to witness that he was about to be ruined.

"I'll do it for nothing—just for fun!" I said, and clumped him on the back.

Realising that I had been pulling his leg, the simple fellow jumped for joy and acclaimed me as a benefactor. I had conceived the whole thing in the most light-hearted way, but his gratitude was rather touching. The opening of a fairway to the sea from that rock-bound tidal creek was a big thing to Enrique, although, of course, the job

was child's play to anybody with the necessary materials and the knowledge to use them. If I had sat up all night planning a sensational *début* before the islanders of Calayan, I could never have hit upon anything so effective as this.

In the twinkling of an eye, I was the man of the hour.

They proclaimed me "*Apo* Burdett!"—*apo* is the Philippino's title of superlative respect.

Messengers ran in all directions to do my bidding, to fetch the tools, the dynamite, detonators and fuses. Meantime, Enrique spread the news and before long there must have been over five hundred people gathered to see *Apo* Burdett open the mouth of their tidal river with dynamite so that their big *viray* could reach the sea. And among my audience I noticed the Señora : she was shepherding the women and children at a safe distance. She waved to me when I waded into the river and began to bore the coral hummocks with holes to receive the charges.

The preliminaries for my Big Bang took nearly an hour, but at last everything was ready. The charges were set, and the match-heads were in the nicks I had cut in the fuses. With a quick look around, I selected a sheltered spot—behind a big tree on the edge of the beach—where I could run for safety.

I lit the fuses—there were three—and ran like blazes to my funk-hole. I had barely reached it when the first hummock went up with a roar, fol-

lowed by the second and the third. Miniature tidal-waves overflowed the banks of the creek, and a shower of coral rock-splinters descended from the sky.

"Ah-h!" cried my admiring audience, and just as one sour old chap began to "Ah-h!" a flying pebble banged him on the head. He was frightfully angry and almost scared to death, rubbing his cranium ruefully. But he was more frightened than hurt.

"Never mind," I said soothingly. "You couldn't have been hit in a better place . . ." Somebody saw the joke and there was a hearty roar of laughter in which our only casualty deigned to join.

With everybody in a jolly humour, we all trooped down to the nearest hummock to see how the dynamite had done its work: it was utterly shattered—a clinking good shot. But the middle hummock still stood in the fairway, apparently intact, and Enrique's joy evaporated as he gazed at it.

I took an iron bar from one of the men and went to investigate. Just as I thought, the hummock was cracked all over—like an egg-shell cracked with a spoon. Inserting the end of my bar of iron, I gently prised at it and the great mass of coral fell into fragments.

The way to the sea was open, and how those folk did yell and scream!

They crowded round showering congratulations and thanks upon me. One or two staid old ladies

kissed me on both cheeks. But though I waited expectantly, none of the girls followed the excellent example of their seniors—they only rewarded me with smiles, at a safe distance, and I observed the Señora among them.

I then performed another sleight-of-hand trick that really went very well. The receding tide had left a pool in the creek, and it was full of fish. I tossed a couple of sticks of dynamite into each of the deep ends and, immediately after the explosions, there was a glut of fine fish floating on the surface—merely waiting to be picked up. Men, women and children dashed into the water, with shouts of glee, splashing about and having a great time while they collected the huge catch.

I waded in with them—I had only a bathing-suit on as, of course, I had been working waist-deep in the water, fixing the charges and boring the rock—and the first fish I found was a fifty-pounder. He was lying in nine feet of water and I dived for him; running my hands along his slippery length until I could get a good grip of his gills, I brought him to the surface and towed him ashore.

The Señora was lying on the bank with Enrique, watching my prowess, and I was feeling rather pleased with myself—until a cracking voice suddenly yelled:

“Apo! . . . Apo Burdett! . . . Crocodile!”

I was out of that pool and on the bank, gun in hand, in record time!

Peering down into the water, I could see the

brute, his immense dark shape looming clearly below the surface. When his long ugly head showed on the surface, I got him just behind the eye and it seemed that my shot was lucky enough to kill him instantly.

"Get a rope round him, some of you!" I shouted. "Tow him ashore and let's have a look at him."

Not a mother's son among them moved. They looked at the crocodile and they looked at me doubtfully. I felt certain that "croc" was dead as a door-nail: but, at the same time, I am bound to admit that a crocodile that is very much alive can look very dead—if he likes—and many an impetuous sportsman has ventured to presume the cayman's death only to be clutched in those terrible clawed forelegs and devoured. . . . By the way, few people seem aware of the fact that the crocodile does not always seize his prey with his teeth: he can use his claws first, like a cat catching a mouse, and his gaping steel-trap jaws come clashing into action next. . . . Anyway, as I had said that big reptile was to be roped and towed ashore, it seemed up to me to do it. It doesn't do to tell these fellows to do anything that you dare not do yourself.

With mixed feelings, I procured a rope, quietly entered the water and swam up to him—with a very wary eye skinned. However, my shot had done its work. I noosed him and they towed him to the bank at the mouth of the river.

That was the finishing touch—the end of a perfect day, so far as my soaring reputation with the

Calayanos was concerned. Of course, I had had a lot of luck, but those simple island folk of the Philippines gave me the kind of ovation which Civilisation usually reserves for the successful candidate at an election. I honestly believe that if I had asked for their Island they would have given it to me. During the whole of my stay among them, if I wanted men for an expedition—to do anything, anywhere—there was a scramble of volunteers. Nor would they let me put my hand in my pocket to pay for a thing. And they fêted me so generously that I was obliged to beg them to go easy !

* * * * *

During my surveying operations along the coast and into the interior I gleaned a lot of interesting information about that picturesque old Chinese pirate, Limajon—pronounced “Lima~~h~~on,” the letter *j* being given the Spanish aspirate. It is remarkable how his name and fame survive from those bygone days. According to folk-lore, Limajon seems to have been a kind of Robin Hood of the Philippines.

Though branded by the Spaniards as a scourge of the China Sea and a particularly cold-blooded ruffian, Limajon seems to have treated the Calayanos with justice and mercy. The Chinese colony which he established lived on the most amicable terms with them. Though he could have taken anything he fancied, by force of arms, with his war-junks always lurking on the north coast in the hidden port of Ibo, Limajon seems to have traded

fairly enough for the excellent ginger which was grown in great quantities in the island: and it was the pirates who named it Calayan—after “Calayio” which, I believe, means “ginger.”

At some remote time, Calayan Island was probably discovered by Chinese junks from Formosa, which came trading cloth for ginger, and gleaned information of the sulphur-deposits of Camiguin—farther south. News of this discovery reached Limajon, and he was swift to realise its material and strategic importance. With characteristic Chinese acumen, he established a naval base in the hidden Calayan port of Ibo, with a colony of munition-workers to manufacture gunpowder from the unlimited resources of Camiguin's sulphur-deposits which were only about twenty miles away to the south-east.

Limajon's piratical crews have left their mark in Calayan for all time, much as the Roman roads of England bear witness to the invasion by Caesar's legions. Through the Barrier Reef to the Ibo Lagoon, these old Chinese fillibusters hacked out a deep clear passage for their junks, and it is there to-day—a fairway for sea-going craft, at least five fathoms in depth. For this substantial token of old Limajon's seamanlike thoroughness, the Calayan islanders of to-day are truly thankful: they are born sailors, and their craftsmen can build you a beautiful little vessel that will ride mountainous waves and rarely ship a drop of water. Presently you shall hear how I fared in

one of these tight little craft, dizzily buffeted by the north-eastern monsoon—and rather acutely wondering which, if any, of those huge green rollers would mark the watery grave of *Apo* Burdett?

There is a reason why the boats of Calayan Island are so immensely superior in seaworthiness and craftsmanship to the ordinary Philippino dug-outs. Years ago, a whale-boat was washed ashore—possibly during Dampier's explorations about 300 years ago in the Babuyan group of islands—and its lines were faithfully copied and elaborated.

The boatbuilders of Calayan consist of four families, and they live on the fringe of a magnificent forest of *apo* trees. I think I have explained that this native word is a title of respect, similar to the Malayan "*tuan*" and the Urdu "*sahib*"; the *apo* tree is a monarch of the forest.

Out of its solid log the natives carve their boats—with infinite patience, skill, and a kind of artistry which evolves a product of which any craftsman might well be proud. When the tree is felled, the colour of the timber is yellow. But in contact with water, it gradually assumes a rich hue of red.

These boat-building families are remarkable people. They take their work very seriously. They have a very proper pride in their craftsmanship. Indeed, with their highly specialised skill and self-centred application to their own job, they reminded me of nothing so much as the trade-guilds and 'prentices of Old London.

They have their master-men and 'prentices—

fathers and sons. It is the youngsters' job to fell the *apo* tree, hew it into suitable lengths and roughly hollow out the logs to lighten them for haulage to the boatbuilders' village where, by the way, they grow their own maize and sugar-cane. The heavy logs are man-handled all the way and stored in palm-leaf sheds where the finishing work is done by the master-men—wood-carvers who can transform a rough-hewn log into a perfect model of the original whale-boat which was washed ashore, 300 years ago, on the beach of Calayan.

Light enough for four men to carry easily, she will comfortably accommodate a crew of five—two sit forward and row in the usual way, while a third man, seated in the stern facing them, pushes his oars and also uses them for steering. The oars are queer little affairs made of sapling, with a round piece of hard wood lashed on the end with rattan.

I commissioned one of these stout Calayano boats for my survey of the coast, and when we rounded the southern point of the island and ran into the north-east monsoon—well, I am afraid that the crew's calm confidence in the seaworthiness of their little ship was not shared, in any noticeable degree, by myself. They kept their oars going quietly while I sat tight in the stern—exchanging *staccato* remarks with Enrique.

With the sensation of a high-speed elevator in a New York hotel, we went up to the crest of enormous waves, shivered uncertainly, and sank into the deep trough. At one moment, I had an expan-

sive view of the rugged and dangerous coast-line where heavy green seas thundered on the barrier-reef—then it was blotted out as we sank swiftly down into the trough of the wave where, as we glanced up, the oncoming swell seemed to rise to terrific heights and menace our tiny craft with certain destruction. But she was, in fact, as buoyant as a cork. And my oarsmen kept her forging ahead, with a sure touch and not a sign of fuss. Those chaotic, dizzying disappearing views of the coastal reef—not unlike peeps from the cockpit of a stunting aeroplane—disturbed them not at all.

Presently, from the crest of a wave, I glimpsed the still waters of the Ibo Lagoon—inside the reef. But where was the channel old Limajon had hewn through the rock for his junks to pass? “The hidden port of Limajon” is certainly well-named. My eyes, good as they are, discerned nothing but the apparently unbroken line of the barrier reef lashed with thunderous waves and surf and flying spray. We were drawing nearer to it every moment, though it looked, to me, like a very good place to keep away from. . . . Our steersman kept a steady unwinking eye on it. There was a new alertness written on his swarthy face which told me that we had almost reached our objective. I wished we were in the lagoon.

“Where’s that channel?” I said, rather testily to Enrique, as we rose on a wave. “I can’t see a sign of it!”

"You will, presently," he replied.

It seemed to me that we were much too close to the reef, but I had the sense not to say so: we were now running a crazy parallel course with it, as if that husky Calayano with the steering-oars had gone mad. When a crash seemed only a matter of another wave or two, I saw the opening of the Chinese pirate's secret channel and knew why we were hugging the barrier-reef: the entrance is at a point where the reef overlaps, and you steer in broadside-on to the shore, but a boat could pass within fifty feet without seeing it from the open sea.

Then our steersman made his tricky turn, and it seemed that we *must* be smashed on the jagged rocks. How those two oarsmen in the bows put their backs into it!

And they pulled us through, laughing and cheering, our stout little Calayano boat saucily sitting the still waters of the lagoon—like a duck on the Round Pond in Kensington Gardens—while the Pacific breakers spent their violence on the barrier reef and drenched us with scudding spray, as if Old Man Neptune were shaking his fist at us.

The Ibo Lagoon was a spectacle of sheer beauty, its clear and tranquil surface of the palest green shimmering in the sun. Peering over the side, I could see startled fish darting everywhere as our oars lazily plashed a warning of the approach of humans: it was the first, and only, time in my varied experience that I have seen the gigantic

tanguingue, or horse-mackerel, in schools. I have taken as many as seventy in the Ibo Lagoon—with one plug of dynamite.

We pulled across the lagoon and entered the creek of the tidal river where we were welcomed by the very few inhabitants of this storm-swept northern coast. They were typical of the islanders one meets anywhere in the Philippines—sturdy fellows, with the swarthy complexion that denotes Spanish origin, and carelessly dressed in their workmanlike kit of loose trousers and open-necked shirt or singlet.

As usual, it was a case of "Liberty Hall," and they freely invited us to their shacks, but I decided to camp on the creek where we had landed. It was a fortunate decision, for on that night I enjoyed some excellent sport that gave me one of the most varied bags of game I ever had in the Philippine Islands.

I was left to enjoy myself alone, for Enrique and the lads needed no second invitation to the islanders' shacks—when they learned that a special brew of *basy* was simply waiting to be "swiped" by a crew of thirsty sailors bold! *Basy* is a native drink upon which it is possible to have a perfectly good "binge," if your inclinations lie in that direction. It is made from the boiled juice of sugar-cane, fermented by berries which are put into the *basy*-jars—called *tinajas*—and left for about three days.

The Calayanos drink a three-days brew of *basy*

with a pleasure I was never able to share : but they have a three-years brew—reserved for very special occasions—which is a *real* drink, to be treated with the reverence due to an old liqueur. The recipe is similar, but the jars are hermetically sealed with palm-leaves and carabou-dung cement and buried in the ground. It has a flavour that rolls gratefully over the tongue, and—as they say in the land of the Eighteenth Amendment—there is some kick to it. Indeed, I remember a hectic night in the Igorote country . . . but that is another story, and I had better return to my camp on the creek of the tidal river of Ibo.

As the roysterers departed for the shacks, they shouted a final warning to me.

“ ’Ware crocodiles ! ”

Why even a crazy Englishman preferred to loaf on the bank of a crocodile-infested river when he could adjourn to the shacks and get decently drunk, if he liked, was something the Calayanos could not understand.

But before they left, they baited a couple of stout fishing-lines for me and cast them in the river. It was quite dark.

“ If you get a bite,” they explained, “ you’ll hear it ”—which may sound rather mystifying to the angler not acquainted with Calayano wiles. They wind the line on a hollow bamboo through which a stick is passed and secured to the river-bank. When a fish bites and makes off with the baited line, the bamboo revolves on the stick,

making a noise like a rattle : all I had to do was to put down my book and pipe and haul in my catch.

" Good luck ! " said Enrique, and departed with the lads—and it occurred to me that their plucky seamanship on the barrier reef had certainly earned a drink ! Care-free, laughing and chattering, they vanished in the deep shadows of the trees. I heard Enrique start to sing, his voice fading in the distance, as I switched on my electric reading-lamp and settled down for a quiet read on my old camp-bed. And remembering Enrique's remarks on the unpleasant subject of crocodiles, I did not forget to see that my loaded gun was handy.

My tranquil hour lasted, as a matter of fact, only about thirty seconds. The bamboo-alarm went off with a racket that made me jump to one of the two lines and haul it in—a ten-pound golden snapper, a beauty. Before I had re-baited the hook, off went the other line—night-fishing in the tidal creek was great sport, and I forgot all about the new novel on my bed : disregarding the publisher's announcement on the cover which said, I remember, " You will not put it down until the last page is read."

In less than an hour I landed seventeen fish, ranging from ten to twenty pounds, and dumped them in a shining heap where Enrique and his merry men would see them—a right royal supper for our communal cooking-pot. Feeling then that I had earned the right to a little repose, I dozed off.

But not for long. The hilarity of my returning comrades soon awakened me. In the still tropical night their slightly inarticulate voices sounded loud enough to wake the inhabitants of the next island.

Enrique was leading the van, unsteadily. And when he trod on my fish in the dark, things began to happen. In comparison with a slippery heap of dead fish, a bar of soap on the stairs gives a better foothold. The distinguished scion of the rulers of the Batan Islands hiccoughed a direful cry, flung his arms around the neck of the nearest Calayano, performed an involuntary war-dance at incredible speed and crashed. . . . Then, for some mysterious reason connected with alcohol, he imagined that all the dead fish were live crocodiles.

"Cayman!" he yelled. "Crocodile! Cay—cayman! Help!"

We nearly died of laughing.

And when we saved him from the imaginary reptiles and sat him safely on the ground, propped against a tree, Enrique complained thickly that we were all drunk; and began to snore.

But Enrique was the only serious casualty. Perhaps the others were more accustomed to *basy*; anyway, they were not too far gone to build a fire and cook the fish for supper. With plenty to eat and plenty to drink—they had brought an emergency jar of *basy* back with them—they were soon at the topmost pinnacle of Calayano bliss.

An hour later they were asleep, and I was about

to follow their example when I heard an unmistakable grunt from the darkness. Not twenty yards away from me, broadside on, was a big boar sniffing and grunting greedily at the remains of our meal. Noiselessly, I picked up my gun and the crash of the shot woke the camp in pandemonium: it even woke Enrique, who was quite certain, this time, that it was a crocodile.

"Cayman!" he yelled again—until I thought of the apocryphal shepherd who cried "Wolf!" The Calayanos, startled from their sleep, chanted "Cayman!" in chorus until I could make my voice heard and tell them it was only a very dead pig—news which instantly transformed their alarm to joy, because it meant more meat, and they began at once to clean the carcass, taking the intestines out.

My temper was becoming slightly frayed at the edges. I had anticipated a quiet evening and a good night's sleep, but every time I closed my eyes something had happened. And the sight of those fellows disembowelling a dead pig beside my camp-bed—instead of doing the dirty job down by the sea—was (as I foolishly thought) the last straw, the limit, and the final touch, the end of a harassing day. Of course, I was wrong. . . . I might have known something else would happen, with those steaming entrails littering the bank of that tidal creek. I didn't have time to begin to swear.

A big crocodile clove the still waters like a torpedo-destroyer at full speed and landed with a

mighty rush on the boar's carcass. No workers in all the world ever downed tools so suddenly as my Calayanos. Nor do I think that any man ever got out of bed so smartly as I did upon that memorable occasion. The huge beast wasn't more than fifteen feet away, his claws clutching those filthy entrails, his immense toothy jaws agape and I fired straight down his throat, though I hardly remember reaching for my gun. It was one of those rare moments when a man acts instinctively.

I saw him slide backwards into the water and vanish from sight. He took the boar's entrails with him, entangled in his claws. And I took my camp-bed quite a long way farther back from the bank of that tidal creek. I began to think it wasn't safe.

* * * * *

A low voice disturbed my slumbers :

" *Apo ! . . . Apo ! . . . Apo !* "

Drowsily I remembered that I had ordered a boatman to call me at dawn, to try the famous fishing in the lagoon. These queer fellows will never wake a sleeping man by shaking him, but by softly and insistently calling his name. They believe that in sleep the soul leaves the body for some higher plane and must be coaxed to return : in a sudden awakening, the soul might be lost and never return to its mortal shell. . . . That may seem an odd idea, to some of us, raising a smile perhaps : but behind it is man's belief in his own immortal soul expressed according to the faith of his fathers.

Low on the horizon, dawn suffused the heavens with opalescent fire and levelled flashing spears of sunlight at the craggy barrier reef.

Stealthily we pulled out across the still waters of the deep lagoon and dropped our baited lines. Astern, we could see our sleeping camp by the tidal creek, and there were tall fronded trees columned against the paling sky; some, growing nearest to the bank, were mirrored to their full height in the glassy water. But soon we were deeply concentrated on our job, for fish were biting finely.

I often wonder if any sportsman knows the thrill of a kill until he has had to rely on line and gun for his food?

On the east coast of Calayan I often caught an interesting fellow which is a kind of pickerel. Silver-bellied with a pretty dark-green back, he is furnished with a double row of needle-pointed teeth about four inches long: when he comes aboard, he is to be treated with deep respect. And he is delicious eating. In about an hour we have over a score in the bottom of our Calayano boat.

The rest of that blistering hot day was spent in surveying the lagoon and its entrance.

This natural port on the island of Calayan could easily be constructed as a naval base for submarines and destroyers. Its strategic importance in the Far East is, of course, obvious, and I have no doubt at all that if America retains possession of the Philippines they must use it, sooner or later. If

they do not, the Japanese will: I had reliable information of the work done in those waters by Japanese motor-schooners whose surveying operations were, I think, far more elaborate than mine.

For several days our work was made impossible by heavy weather and I spent some time exploring the northern coast, but without discovering anything of very great interest. Once, I was within four miles of the site of an ancient Chinese camp where, I was told, there are great quantities of antique Chinese pottery: to my great regret, I had no opportunity of visiting it. But we saw two cemeteries of the lost races of Camiguin, which, however, were not so well built as the cairns which I discovered later, on another expedition.

During four months of the year, schools of whales visit the coast of Calayan—from January to April. I often amused myself by watching their clumsy pranks: a whale has its playful moments, like a porpoise. And I have seen them fight. I have watched many a terrific combat when threshers attack the gigantic sperm whale. They leap furiously from the water and the impact of their vast bulk striking the surface again can be heard at a great distance.

I used to watch them for hours as I loafed on the sun-baked beach, pipe in mouth, when my work was done. By this time I was beginning to think about the relief boat of the Coastguards, which was to end my exile in Calayan. I had completed my survey of the island, and deepened the channel

through the reef to enable *virays* to navigate it at half-tide—dynamiting the rock. After that I really had very little to do but wander around and see what I could see.

I was struck by the number of uninhabited dwellings that seemed to be in excellent condition, and made inquiries among the Calayanos to discover the reason. The reply was always the same, with an awed sidelong glance at the empty house.

“Señor, it is haunted by an Evil Spirit.”

The Evil Spirit—so I was invariably told—did not take up its quarters inside the house, but underneath it: and then, to whomsoever dared dwell there, death came surely. The logical cold-blooded explanation of those empty houses seemed to be that when a Calayano died, the family cleared out because they were afraid of ghosts.

“Señor,” some husky fellow would say to me, fearfully, “my mother died in that house. . . .”

That was enough for him, and he forthwith allowed the supernatural agents to enjoy vacant possession and changed his address to a fresh and healthier site.

Before we smile at the simple islander of Calayan, it were as well to remember our own weird stories of haunted houses where—so we are told—restless spirits provide phenomena which engage the serious attention of psychical research societies. I have seen so many savages preoccupied with spiritual phenomena founded in the mystery of death. I have seen the Dusuns risk death in the coils of a

giant python, rather than slash it with their formidable *parangs*, believing that the serpent is an embodied spirit. I remember the Tirurays leaving all their worldly possessions and going on a pilgrimage to the mountains—at the call of a self-styled prophet—to find the Lost Road to Paradise, a long procession of pagans in devout search of life everlasting, walking in procession to the solemn clangour of brass gongs. . . . But on Calayan Island one day, I was suddenly confronted with a glimpse of the living death, of forgotten men banished by their fellows perpetually to a lair only fit for animals in the jungle.

It happened just before I left the island, when I was loafing happily, waiting for the boat, looking forward to a good time.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LEPER

THOSE latter idle days on Calayan Island were good. I was frankly enjoying myself. I was in high good humour. Every man knows the expansive mood which follows a ticklish job which has been done, not only without disaster—which, far too often, has seemed inevitable—but with a fair measure of success: *The Village Blacksmith* let himself go on this subject, but he talked too much. I will only say that the world seemed a pleasant place and I was glad to be alive, laughing with my good comrades, hearing the sea-breeze rustling the palms, lulled by the lazy scent of the jungle, and warmed by the sun that shone every day from clear blue skies.

With Enrique, one day, I was wandering beneath canopied trees, with luxuriant foliage on every side. I could hear the gay voices of my Calayano boatmen in the distance, and the muted roar of the surf on the Barrier reef. Enrique had just brought down a brace of jungle-pigeons and, as we shoved through the breast-high undergrowth to pick them up, we came suddenly to a concealed clearing in the jungle, where the charred ruins of a burnt-out shack scarred the ground.

"Hullo!" I said sharply, "what's happened here?"

Among the debris of crocks and cooking-utensils there were human bones.

"Come away, señor!" Enrique whispered, sheer-ing off. "This is a bad place, señor——"

"It seems to have been unlucky for this fellow," I said, pointing to the blackened bones on the ground. "That's a bit of a human leg, Enrique! What's happened here? Eh?"

Enrique told me what had happened, and as he spoke in low measured phrases it seemed to me that the sun-lit jungle darkened and chilled.

"That was a leper's house!"

"A leper?"

"Yes, señor. There are several near by."

"But the fire, Enrique?"

"When a leper dies, his body is burnt with his shack and all his belongings. The contagion, señor, you see. . . ."

I nodded. I seemed to see the holocaust, the awful end of that forlorn, diseased outcast, whose calcined bones lay at my feet.

"And there are other lepers, living?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

Enrique pointed to a trodden path in the jungle, with a big flat rock at the entrance.

"Don't go there, señor! Don't, for the love of God!"

I walked away, depressed in spirit.

Enrique told me of the loneliness that enveloped their wretched existence, buried alive in the dark jungle from which they must never emerge, not even in death. They were banished from all human ken, for all time. It was death for them to be seen by the islanders. And from their living tomb, perhaps they heard us sing and laugh. . . .

It was a thought that filled me with a new and strange gravity, quickening my imagination and touching my heart. I can hardly explain it: but I realised my own glowing health and supple strength, as if I had suddenly encountered some fresh discovery, and I felt oddly humble and half-ashamed. . . . That steadfast rock looked like a tomb in the jungle half-lights, and I tried to imagine the misery of a sick man stumbling past it on his pilgrimage of woe to join the forsaken souls of the lepers' colony in earthly hell.

After that—although I never told Enrique—I often stole away from our jolly camp, alone, and placed little gifts on the big flat rock at the forbidding entrance to the trodden jungle-path—cigarettes, cigars, or a share of the fish I had caught in the lagoon. One morning I was a little later than usual, and I caught a glimpse of a leper lurking in the undergrowth furtively, like an animal. He had crept from his lair to collect the presents, as usual, and how the sight of that bare rock must have saddened him!

Hearing my footsteps, he disappeared in a flash: but I shall always remember his woful countenance,

his large melancholy eyes—he was not the loathly spectacle I had imagined, though his disease, of course, had set its indelible marks upon him, of which elephantiasis was one. . . . And the leper was an old man.

Somehow I thought of David's cry :

Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not !

I placed my daily offering on the rock and departed soberly.

It became a daily rite of mine : and though it was only a trivial thing it made me feel happy. I liked to think that the old leper knew somebody was sorry for him.

One day, however, I was able to give him a real surprise-present—and maybe he's got it now. It happened this way :

Among the numerous friends I made on Calayan Island was a very old woman—a dear old soul, whose shrewd and kindly eyes looked out from a face that must have had a million wrinkles in it. She made my cigars for me and I paid her bill in coffee-beans and sugar-cakes—*panoches*, as the Calayanos call those toothsome goodies. Our commercial relations were enlivened by many courtesies of a delightful kind—an exchange of presents, for instance. When I gave the dame some titbit from my ample stores, she would be sure to return the compliment with some tiny treasure of her own.

It was shortly after my discovery of the lepers' colony that she presented me with a fowl-coop

containing a hen and a brood of fluffy chicks : and I thought, at once, of my poor old leper *protégé*. Surely these pretty little things would give him something to occupy his darkened mind? He could watch them grow, and handle them, fondle them.

At the usual hour, taking care not to be late this time, I hiked off with the coop and set it down carefully on the flat rock. Then I concealed myself in the jungle and waited for the old man to appear.

Stealthily he crept up the jungle-path, crouching with his leonine head held low and his attenuated shoulders hunched. When he reached the rock and saw my coop, with the fussy hen and her fluffy brood . . . Well, that old chap crooned over them and blubbered with joy.

I don't suppose I had ever realised until then what it means to be lonely—not until I heard a forsaken old man weep for joy just because a hulking brute like me gave him a chicken or two that cost nothing but a little charity of thought.

His woful countenance was transformed, as if by a miracle, and it seemed to grow hazy as I peered at him in the hot and quivering air. He threw his thin arms round the coop and hugged it to him as he shuffled feebly down the trodden jungle-path and vanished from my sight. I listened to the faint swish of leafy boughs as he brushed them aside, and the dry crack of a twig under foot, until the jungle was silent and still once more, and only the

muted roar of the surf on the far-away Barrier Reef could be heard.

I think that's about all.

Except that before I departed from Calayan, I left him a good store of tobacco, matches, a bundle of old *Saturday Evening Posts* (I thought the brightly-coloured pictorial advertisements might please him), a can of kerosene and a lamp: and a few snug blankets, for the winter nights on that storm-swept island are cold and dreary.

He must have known that was a farewell gift, and I rather hated to think how he would feel about it when he went to the big flat rock next day. I guess that poor old leper missed me, and I rather missed my daily pilgrimage to the shrine of a little mercy and compassion.

Perhaps he is dead.

Perhaps his funeral pyre has been lit in the Calayano jungle and the bright flames reached up to Heaven.

CHAPTER IX

THE THREE "KING HERODS" OF BABUYAN

AS the time for my departure drew near, many young men of the Calayanos earnestly beseeched me to take them off the island. If I had liked, I could have sailed for Luzon with the lustiest crew of emigrants ever seen on the mainland. And their very human story was always the same. They would broach the subject diffidently, taking me aside. I used to talk to them like a Dutch uncle :

" Señor, when you go away, will you take me with you ? "

" Why ? Take you away from this island ? Where you've got everything a man can desire, eh ? "

" Everything, señor—except women."

It was true.

A peculiarity of Calayan Island was the scarcity of women. I could never discover any reason for it. But there were so few women and girls that amorous swains had a very thin time indeed, with bachelordom staring them hard in the face. There was tremendous competition among the young bloods for the plainest girl. I never saw an unmarried girl over fifteen years of age ; and a twelve-

years-old bride was commonly the central figure of a Calayano wedding.

Girls were usually bespoke in their tenderest years, and rivalry among the men was fierce. To them, the boat that took *Apo* Burdett to the mainland of Luzon was a link with a Happy Land, far, far away, where girls were to be had for the asking.

I mentioned these requests of frustrated love to Enrique.

"Why not," I said, "send a batch of picked young men over on the yearly boat, let them stay a year or so, marry and bring their wives back to Calayan?"

Enrique's "No!" was courteous as ever, but it lacked nothing in decision. After all, Enrique had to live on that island: and, therefore, it is not so surprising that he was unenthusiastic about a scheme to send his primitive young Lotharios girl-hunting on the mainland. He seemed to think the results would be rather a mixed bag, when they came home with their spouses; and I shouldn't be surprised if Enrique was right, so I said no more about it.

I never heard any satisfactory explanation of the scarcity of women in Calayan.

But in another island of the Babuyan group, I discovered the grim reason for a scarcity of men.

I had been to Camiguin, with Bartolomeo, and it was while we were working there that I heard strange stories of the people of Babuyan Claro Island, which was not far away.

According to reports current in Camiguin, there

were only three men in Babuyan Claro—and this mysterious male trio had a hundred women. Stranger still, according to the stories I heard, *their children were all girls!* Obviously, no natural explanation could account for this astonishing state of affairs. Male children must be born, in the natural course of human nature. What happened to the man-children of Babuyan Claro, if this story were true?

I decided to pay a visit to the Three Men of Babuyan Claro, and find out what was going on. Here was a first-class mystery waiting to be solved. And, of course, I suspected foul play—a suspicion which was increased by a confidential warning that inquisitive strangers were unwelcome; and visitors had been known to die suddenly, of poisoning, for the Three Men of Babuyan Claro had nothing to learn from the Borgias.

Neap tides were coming on: so I decided to run over on the ebb, and return on the flood—I had been warned that the spring tides between Babuyan Claro and Camiguin were extremely dangerous. Luckily, we had a fair wind there and back, our only difficulty being the landing on the beach: which consists of enormous volcanic boulders spewed out of the nearby smoking crater. There was a heavy on-shore swell running, and I knew that if our *viray* bumped a boulder she would crack like an egg. I solved the difficulty by dropping anchor about fifty yards from the beach and slacking-off the chain until we were close-in.

It sounds much easier than it really was, for our old *viray* was tugging at her anchorage and plunging about like a rearing horse on a tight bit-rein, a mere toy in the heavy swell that broke on the boulders in driving clouds of spray. Nor were our troubles over when our anchor found its bed and held. I dared not risk taking the *viray* closer in, so overboard we went and swam for it: it was the only possible way to get ashore on that wicked beach. I am a strong swimmer and the distance, of course, was nothing: but the last yard or so was heavy going. The swell flung us at the slimy boulders and sucked us back again in the back-wash. I know I drank a lot of sea-water that day, and I carried the bruises about with me for weeks.

There was a *rancheria*—or village—a few hundred yards from the beach, but we could see no people about. There were clearings in the jungle, and I noticed plantations of sugar-cane, corn, sweet potatoes and beans. And a number of pigs were nosing around, rooting and grunting. The soil seemed very fertile—as it usually is in the vicinity of volcanoes, being composed of volcanic ash and decomposed lava—and the village was built on a long low-lying promontory, which joined the smoking cone of Babuyan Claro to the main portion of the island.

The oppressive silence and deserted appearance of the village, as we approached it, might have suggested an ambush if we had been invading the territory of ordinary tribal men. But I had no fears on that score: after all, there were only three

men and a bunch of women and children in the place, so we pushed on and began to examine the first shack we came to.

It was empty—a crude, primitive hovel, whose rough walls were reinforced with rocks and clay to withstand the violence of the typhoons of the Babuyan and Balintang Channels. Utensils were of earthenware, cooking-pots predominating in the collection.

But the strangest thing about that hideous shack, in an almost unknown island, were the decorations on the door: it was plastered with bank-notes of United States currency! Some were hundred-dollar notes, but most were of a lower denomination. We rubbed our eyes and stared again. Were we on the track of a fortune?

I almost wept to see how many perfectly good notes had been torn across and stuck on the door in fragments. What was the big idea? How, in the name of all that is wonderful in heathen-luck, had these people landed such a wad of bank-notes that they used them for wallpaper?

I was startled from these reflections by a shout outside the shack.

And there were the Three Men of Babuyan Claro, surrounded by their women. They were almost completely naked and—most appropriately—as ugly as sin: any one of them might have sat for Epstein as a model. I think I can speak for Bartolomeo and my Ilocanos, as well as for myself, when I say that the lords of creation in that part of the world

certainly did not have to suffer any jealous qualms on our account. A more villainous-looking lot I never saw in my life—and that's saying something.

At first, our appearance caused a lot of excitement and shouting, and it was evident that I was the centre of attraction. Old Bartolomeo was right out of the picture, for which he seemed rather thankful. Wildly gesticulating and jabbering to each other, the natives pointed at me; and they seemed to be calling out some name.

Then, as the men stepped toward us, the hubbub hushed.

In the rather uncanny silence, I fixed the nearest one with my eye as he came nearer. ("Any rough stuff from you, Bluebeard," I thought, loosening my muscles, "and you'll have a pile-driver on the jaw!") But he approached with every gesture of humility, took one of my hands in his (but I had the other fist ready for action) and placed it gently upon his bowed head. The others followed his example, and it seemed that peace was declared.

"*Apo!*" he said, and his ugly friends echoed it.

"*Apo!*"

"*Apo!*"

I hope I acknowledged the title of respect with suitable affability; but, frankly, I was not feeling at all flattered by being received almost as if I were one of themselves, among such lascivious black-guards.

I had no idea what dialect these people spoke, but the familiar word *Apo* encouraged me to try

a few more Ilocano words on them and I found that we could converse fairly easily. The Three Men talked freely, but their women stood apart, eyeing us with the greatest interest—I believe I was the first white man they had ever seen.

I pointed to the American bank-notes.

"Where did you get these?"

"*Apo*, the sea washed them up on the beach. In a big box. Yes."

Another story of the typhoon's toll on good ships in the Far Eastern seas. It was impossible to obtain any details of the wreck. As for the bank-notes, these savages had no idea that they were of any value. As a rather forlorn hope, I enquired if they had kept any of them—it nearly broke my heart to see those torn fragments on the door of the shack. But the big booby shook his head; and I understood him to say that when they broke open the box to see if there was anything good in it, they gave the bits of paper to the children—to play with.

I sighed and changed the subject. Nobody will ever know the wealth that was destroyed by those brats on the beach of Babuyan Claro. And having fooled away a fortune in good American currency, they received my cheap presents of strung-beads and a few light axes with extravagant gratitude. . . . That was the only time I ever encountered anything like a treasure-island romance.

Meanwhile, in exchange for my "junk" I had to accept offerings of sugar-cane, ears of green corn, and sweet potatoes: and during these courtesies

I was cautiously pursuing enquiries, and taking a good look at the notorious Three Men of Babuyan Claro.

All showed signs of age and lustful living, and they went stark naked, but bore themselves with the unashamed deportment of primitive man in a natural state. By the deference paid to him it was easy to see that the eldest—who seemed to be nearing the end of his allotted span—was the Headman or Chieftain of the island.

The stories I had heard in Camiguin were true, and the facts of the communal family-life of Babuyan Claro were simple and terrible.

There were three family-groups, or harems, the largest being maintained by the Headman. And these three old men appropriated all the women and girls on the island and held them in concubinage without regard for age or kinship. Young maidens of tender years were obliged to join their own mothers in common subjugation to the patriarch of their family-group.

Male children were murdered—usually at birth, but none was permitted to live for longer than a year. Personally, I only saw a very few and they were suckling at the mother's breast. There were crowds of little girls running about at play, but it was noticeable that not one boy was to be seen among them.

A certain amount of interchange was practised between the three family-groups, but this seems to have been at the whim of the headmen. Patriarchal

subjection of women was the law of the island, part of the established order. I do not know—and nobody knows—how long this state of affairs has existed in Babuyan Claro: I saw it, as described here, twenty years ago. But a very interesting point to note is this: these people show no signs of that physical degeneracy attributed to in-breeding, but seemed as healthy as any other islanders in the Philippines.

The community was absolutely communal in all things. Everything was held in common ownership, and the land was industriously cultivated.

I heard a strange story from the old men of an Englishman who had lived on the island many years ago. One day, they said, he disappeared as mysteriously as he came and was never seen again—and when they saw me swim ashore from my *viray* they thought the white exile had returned. Later, I had confirmation of their story, though nobody knew who the Englishman was or why he chose to go into exile among savages who are literally God-forsaken. . . . The Headman offered to show me the site of the mysterious exile's old camp—where he had built a house—but it involved a day's journey across rough country, and I could not spare the time. Moreover, I found these men repulsive, and the knowledge of their frightful crimes depressed me. I was glad to board our *viray* again and feel the clean tang of the sea in my face.

Here in Babuyan Claro were men who did, indeed, out-Herod Herod.

But I was not unduly surprised. Human nature in the primitive state—or indeed, when some crisis of savage primal instinct strips off the veneer of centuries of civilisation—is capable of anything.

It was not my first discovery of the kind.

In the early days of gold-mining in Western Australia, I met an aboriginal tribe in which three men—as in Babuyan Claro—exercised the *droit de seigneur* upon all the tribal women: they did not murder male children, but made them innocuous by native surgery.

When the early pioneers and prospectors returned to civilisation with the story, they were laughed at, and there was quite a lot of more or less good-natured banter about “Travellers’ Tales.” But the facts were proved later by scientific investigation.

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There is a sequel to my story of the Herods of Babuyan Claro.

Many years after my visit the volcano erupted.

The infamous reign of the trio of “Herods,” who had talked to me and strutted on the beach, was over when the eruption took place. They were dead, but many of their concubines were killed. Their fertile lands were obliterated. There was death and panic and famine on the island.

General Wood—the great American administrator—was Governor of the Philippine Islands at the time of the catastrophe, and visited the scene in his yacht, *The Apo*, organising relief work for the survivors. News of the eruption of the Babuyan Claro volcano

was reported by vessels passing the island, and motor-ships were rushed to the spot with everything necessary for the succour of these people, who were eventually evacuated to Camiguin.

Later, they were returned to their island-home—they could not, or would not, settle in Camiguin.

And then, in Babuyan Claro, the old order changed and gave place to the new.

Since the death of the "Herods" many years had elapsed; and, the murder of male children having ceased, there was a rising generation of young men upon whom the hideous mantle of their fathers had fallen—but with this difference: with the death of the patriarchs of the family-groups, matriarchal rule was established, and Babuyan Claro was known as the Isle of Women.

It would be interesting to know how those three old men came by their death. There is no evidence upon the subject, but I am certain that the women murdered them. One pictures the tyrants growing senile and beginning to dread the savage contemplative stare of the hags and wenches—like old lions on their last legs in the centre of a ring of jackals and vultures. . . . I think it is most likely that they were forcibly dosed with their own poison, which was the favourite method of murder.

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The picture I have drawn of these benighted people is a sombre one, but—can we, of the Western World, merely turn away with a gesture of horror? It is easy to turn away from the ugliness of real

life and pretend that it does not exist : but that is not the pioneer's way, nor the missionary's way, because humanity asks for something more. When you have seen the darkest ways of unenlightened mankind in the wilderness of the world—as I have—you have to think about it. Often, over a contemplative pipe, I have to think about the Isle of Women, and I know that the moralist has plenty of hard names that fit them like a glove. And then I think of them as I saw them in their island home—quietly living the only life they have ever known in this world, subscribing to their own immemorial custom. They have no conscious thought of doing evil. Indeed, according to the standards of Babuyan Claro, they are strictly conventional.

“ All the ways of man,” said King Solomon, “ are clean in his own eyes . . . ”

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Well, I have only told a plain story of what I have seen and I shall leave it at that. For the Pilot who is on the bridge with me in this *Odyssey* is not taking our barque into the troubled waters of Morality.

CHAPTER X

SARANGANI'S LOST TREASURE, AND THE MOROS

FROM the far north of the Philippine Islands—Babuyan—I went down to the old-time haunts of an infamous Moro pirate, south of Mindanao.

We steered towards the setting sun, with the Babuyan Islands going down into the sea astern; and after rounding the north-west point of Luzon, swung due south—through the Mindoro Straits and the Sulu Sea, down the west coast of Mindanao, passing Zamboanga and glimpsing the Sulu Archipelago, eventually dropping anchor off the island of Sarangani.

High up on a promontory, towering above the teeming jungle-growth, two clumps of feathery palms stand out clearly against the sky. They mark the grave of Sarangani, the pirate, and the Moros will tell you that this place is haunted, after night-fall, by the ghosts of his murdered female-slaves. There certainly seems to be something sinister in the hot still air of this island of ghastly memories. After sundown, my pagan crew resolutely refused to set foot ashore there.

Sarangani's loot—with the bodies of his murdered victims—certainly lies buried there, and the old corsair's name has been written on the map. His tomb is a local object of superstitious awe. He sleeps in the island that bears his name ; and those tall clumps of palms—one at his head, and one at his feet—almost seem to nod their fronded heads close together as if they were whispering of bloody sea-battles along the ravaged coasts, and of orgies in the pirates' island stronghold when Sarangani returned with booty and captive girls.

Sarangani was a scourge of the seas, the most ferocious of all the dreaded Moros—buccaneers and bandits to the backbone.

In my wanderings through the wonderful and romantic island of Mindanao, with its extraordinary variety of Mohammedan and pagan tribes, I invariably found the predominating race to be the Moros, who rule the Sulu Archipelago and Northern Mindanao.

There, in the Southern Philippines, they held almost undisputed sway for centuries, successfully defied the Spaniards, and only yielded to American dominance after a sharp campaign.

They certainly bear the stamp of the born fighter and the typical corsair of the East. With fearless eyes deep-set beneath beetling brows, wide in the nostril, with cruel sensual mouths, you can picture them swarming over the bulwarks of a captured ship, ripe for the uttermost excesses of robbery, murder and rape.

Not until the American Occupation of 1898 did the Moros suffer any appreciable check to their marauding expeditions.

The Spaniards were quite unable to cope with them, and they continued to ravage the coastal towns from Cebu in the south to Northern Luzon. Bold and skilful mariners, they sailed those turbulent waters with complete unconcern—caring little for the monsoons, their hearts set on loot and women for profit and pleasure.

On Sarangani Island I have often gazed at the deserted beach and tried to picture the homecoming of those laden ships. . . .

The Sangil and Samal Moros cared as little for an angry sea as they did for the Spanish Dons. With their *vintas*—probably the fastest sailing ship in the world—they prowled as far north on the north coast of Luzon as Bangui, which they sacked and destroyed twice, and as far east as the wonderful little port of San Vicente, where there is a little island named after them. It is a significant name, too. It is called Fuga Moros—which means “ Moro Fire ” and vividly suggests a cruel baptism with flame and sword.

Lest anybody should imagine that the piratical instincts of the Moros are a thing of the past, I had better mention right away that they were taking pot-shots at me quite recently: I was travelling overland from Malabang to Camp Keithley, and while crossing Lake Lanao on a launch, a gang of Lanao Moros opened fire on us.

In bygone days the Moro pirates were feared so much that they were able to rob and rape almost with complete impunity. They even went so far as to establish a big colony or depôt on the Island of Cuyo in the Bisayas, where—as I have seen for myself—numerous relics of looted gold and silver may be picked up in the creeks and small gullies. After heavy rains, ornaments from the bodies of buried Moros, and their captured female-slaves—interred in shallow graves on the hill-sides—are to be found on the lower slopes.

There is a story which accounts for the number of feminine trinkets among the Moro graveyard relics. Dying women would deck themselves in all the jewellery they possessed—to make sure that their rivals should have none of it. By Moro custom it would be buried with her, and it were sacrilege even to *touch* the trinkets she wore in death.

In the good old days—so far as the Moros were concerned—of piracy, Sarangani, most notorious buccaneer of them all, plundered, murdered and raped to his heart's content until his name was the terror of the Philippines, from north to south. Sarangani was the bloodiest of all the Moro Datos who made their piratical nests in the Sulu and Celebes Seas. Even in death, the tribes still fear him. The natural beauty of his palm-fronded grave on the hill is a thing of superstitious horror to them. . . . I found, by the way, that the old Moro burial-grounds were usually planted with palms—the bamboo, and areca, and the betel.

Strategically, the island was ideal for Sarangani's operations. Its natural strength consisted of three land-locked ports, two of which commanded the renowned Sarangani Straits—and woe betide the unfortunate merchantman becalmed in those narrow waters! Her every movement was noted by hawk-eyed scouts, and when she had drifted near enough the Moros swarmed to the attack in their fast raking *vintas* and boarded her fore and aft, port and star-board.

The stoutest crew hadn't a dog's chance. After the massacre, the ship was towed in, looted thoroughly and dismantled.

But Sarangani did not confine his activities to the Straits. Those little piratical forays in the neighbourhood of his home were regarded, probably, as welcome breaks to the peaceful monotony of his domestic life. Like all great freebooters, Sarangani was a bold adventurer and sailed far from his island home. Perhaps his happiest hunting-grounds were in the northern islands of the Visayas, and along the coast of the great island of Luzon itself.

These Moro pirates were women-hunters as well as treasure-seekers, and trafficked heavily in female slaves. Their ships would return loaded, not only with rich booty but with terrified young women, whom they had captured during their cruise. Year after year, Sarangani sailed north on the south-west monsoon and returned on the north-east monsoon with cargoes of loot and dispirited captive girls.

Although the Spanish Government offered big rewards for his capture, he always gave them the slip and managed to return in triumph to Sarangani Island. Naturally, during those many years of successful raiding and looting, old Sarangani accumulated an immense hoard of gold, silver, and precious stones.

According to local tradition, he was fabulously rich and his wealth aroused the cupidity of his brother-pirates—but they rarely dared to touch him. His indomitable courage and sagacity were too much for the Moros as well as for the Spaniards. A few futile attempts were made to wrest some of his hoard from him, but they were defeated and punished with the most frightful forms of cold-blooded ferocity. Sarangani exacted such terrible revenge that at last he was left in comparative peace.

When this old sea-wolf lay dying, surrounded by his numerous wives and concubines, he only smiled grimly when they asked him to tell them where his treasure was hidden—the golden nest-egg of fifty years of piracy!

He replied, saying, "Who seeks, may find."

His descendants are still seeking.

There is no doubt at all about Sarangani's treasure being buried on the island, but nobody has the foggiest idea where it is. The wicked, sardonic old corsair left no clue—not a single one. He believed in, and acted upon, the ancient adage: "Dead men tell no tales."

When he had treasure ready for his secret *cache*,

he ordered it to be embarked on one of his *vintas*, at night—by *superfluous women-slaves who were growing old and unattractive*. They were the carriers who bore the treasure to its hiding-place. And they never returned to Sarangani Island. Sarangani's deathly treasure-boat sailed at night : and he always returned on the following night—alone. It is not difficult to imagine the terror of the old women when they were detailed to join these nocturnal expeditions. They knew what it meant. They knew that when they had assisted to bury the treasure of their lord and master, he would bury them with it. . . . That was the wretched destiny of hundreds of captive women, dragged into exile and slavery, decked with rare jewels and petted for a few years, and then slaughtered.

There must be a number of these treasure-hecatombs somewhere in the vicinity of the island—but any thought of treasure-hunting there would make me feel like a ghoul robbing a cemetery. Nevertheless, I have had my eyes and ears open, and I do not think it would be very difficult to locate a likely spot : I know a place that is, and always has been, absolutely *tabu*—supposed to be infested with enormous pythons. Legend—or perhaps it is more than that—hath it, that Sarangani himself always warned his people that whosoever ventured to visit that unhallowed spot was never seen alive again. And I think his warning was no idle tale—he seems to have personally attended to the curious ones.

I have landed on the island and scouted around,

but my pagan crew resolutely refused to set foot ashore. Of course, I saw nothing but teeming jungle : but, though it may have been a fancy of mine, there seemed to be some taint in the air, something noisome and sepulchral. . . . Maybe something sinister and deadly haunts this sepulchre of murdered slaves and murderer's loot.

From Sarangani's time down to this present day, the Moros have always been in a more or less unsettled state—with piracy bred in the bone. Their allies of former days were the Bajaos of the Sulu Sea, whose villages I saw on the northern coast of Borneo, built high up on piles in the numerous estuaries. But now, although descendants of the corsairs who ravaged the trading ports, they are colonists living under the British Flag. Ostensibly, they are a law-abiding people : but, in my opinion, it would take very little to make them " fly off the hilt " at any moment.

In their homeland in Mindanao—from the Cottabato River on the west coast, to Ilagan on the north—they are very touchy, as old settlers of Northern Mindanao know only too well. It was no surprise to me when those Moro sportsmen started taking pot-shots at us in the constabulary launch on Lake Lanao—it's a habit of theirs.

Somebody said : " They're at it again."

It was long-range stuff, and nothing to get excited about—not upon that occasion, at any rate.

* * * * *

Really, these Moros are exceedingly picturesque



A MORO VINTA, THE FASTEST SAILING VESSEL IN THE WORLD

PUBLIC LIBRARY;
SOUTHFIELDS,

blackguards. With their indomitable sense of independence, and their inherent passion for a gaudy fight, they are he-men. And I may as well confess that I have a sneaking regard for their manly virtues as fighters. Upon the other hand, I could never admire their superlative skill—indeed, it was a fine art—in annexing useful articles of my kit when I was looking the other way.

But I can forgive them a lot for introducing me to the thrilling joys of sailing a Moro *vinta*. I believe this native craft is the fastest sailing-boat in the world. It is so light that a few men can pick it up and carry it. Bow and stern are razor-edged, and there is an enormous square sail on the tripod bamboo mast which lends the feather-weight *vinta* a sailing-speed that is literally terrific. I was an old and experienced sailor when I took my first trip on a Moro *vinta*—but I sat tight and marvelled when she really got going before a fair wind. It wasn't sailing, it was flying.

And the *vinta* was built for speed, in the far-off days of Sarangani and his corsairs. Towed by the *sapits*—the bigger vessels—she was loosed, like a hawk, on the pirates' quarry.

The usual fighting complement of the Moro fleet was about twenty sail of *sapits*, and they carried slaves to work at the paddles in a calm—like the galley-slaves of Rome. Even when the wind was dead, a *vinta* with slaves at the paddles was the fastest craft afloat. Nothing could escape the sea-wolves, crouching and ready to board, armed, lusting

for blood and loot . . . you can imagine the chase with a *vinta* seeming to leap under you like a live thing.

The *vinta*'s crew, by the way, carried a Moro implement of sea-warfare which is, I think, unique—a long pole with a barbed iron head, like a huge hook. They used it to “yank” their victims overboard from the doomed ship and caught them like you catch a fish on a hook.

Imagine the spectacle—as seen from the deck of a helpless merchantman, perhaps with women on board—as the *vintas* rushed towards them, crowded with fighting Moros clad in chain-mail of copper links, the white of their eyes showing under the steel peak of shining Spanish casques! . . . I don't think orchid-hunting in the Far East would have appealed to me in Sarangani's day.

The Moros were desperately hard up when I first visited the Island of Sulu, many years ago, and a magnificent *kris*, ivory-hilted and inlaid with gold and silver, could be bought for a few pesos. I saw complete suits of copper chain-mail with plates of caribou horn being hawked around for six pesos. *Sic transit gloria*. . . .

The Sulu Moro shares most of the vices and virtues of his Lanao brother. He is truculent and restless. He keeps you guessing what he is going to do next. Fortunately, the Sultan of the Sulu Moros is a sagacious ruler—the British North Borneo Government still pays him tribute—and he manages to restrain his unruly subjects with a fair measure of success.

But they did insist on having a slam at the Americans, and put up quite a creditable show before they were compelled to realise that they had met their masters. That was in the days of the American occupation, and the "dough-boys" gave those Lanao Moros a licking they didn't forget . . . until 1925, when they started again!

During a cruise of five months among the small islands and atolls of the Tawi-Tawi group of the Sulu Archipelago, I came into close contact with the Moros—the Samal Moros, as they are universally known in that location. I was looking for manganese, which I found on the little island of Sinagbuan off the north-east coast of Tawi-Tawi—a small atoll completely hidden by a belt of mangroves—and one of the rarer kinds of orchid which I believe I found, but I could not verify it as the plant was not in flower. I took a few with me, on board my *vinta*, but they were killed by sea-water.

I had to return to Jolo, a three days' sea-trip by *vinta*, and we were caught in the whirlpools of one of the fierce tides that sweep between the islands of the Sulu Archipelago: and that was the end of my orchids. There is a very well-known whirlpool here which is caused by the tides racing over an almost unfathomable hole in the sea-bed—probably an old crater. When the flood tides reach this great depth, a tremendous vortex is formed. The Moros refuse to venture within a mile of it. And I am inclined to believe their story of a steamer that was sucked into the whirling vortex and disappeared.

I had to risk the trip by *vinta* because the launch which was supposed to call for me apparently remembered another engagement. Anyway, I was left to my own devices at Tindabato and the launch never appeared.

I had only about three weeks' rations, but I found a friend in Moro Musli who did what he could for me in the circumstances. It was during my stay with him that I enjoyed those thrilling hours on the racing *vintas*. Also, I saw a good deal of the daily life of the Samals of the Sulu Sea.

Musli had several brothers. One was a Hadji and another an Imâm, and with these two brothers in the Mohammedan priesthood he was a notable personage. Also, he was a revenue-officer and he owned a small island where he cultivated cocoa-nuts. Quite an important man, was Musli. But I regret to say that his friends were the most thievish gang of villains I ever met in my life. I shall have something to say about their dubious accomplishments, later on.

Musli took a proper pride in his cocoa-nut plantation. Tapering upward from its sturdy base in columned symmetry, the cocoa-nut palm is capped with drooping fronds widely outstretched like the plumed feathers of a giant's head-dress. In the noon-heat of a tropical day their sombre shadows weave fantastic patterns on the sun-drenched ground—where the bare-footed Moros walk silently, turbaned and girdled with gaudy sashes, their muscular chests exposed by short open tunics. One fellow

proudly wore a pair of blue cavalry pants with a scarlet stripe—*sans* boots and leggings—in lieu of the close-fitting Moro trousers.

One of the difficulties which had occurred to me, at the beginning of my enforced sojourn among these people, was the language problem. I knew very little of the Samal lingo, but Musli—who was introduced to me by the schoolmaster of the island—spoke very good English, an accomplishment which he shared with several of the young girls and boys, and for this small mercy I duly rendered thanks.

My first jaunt with Musli was a sick call. His brother, the Imâm, was down with fever and my ministrations—good doses of calomel and quinine—were very gratefully received.

This was a sea-trip, by *vinta*, and we were accompanied by Musli's wife and one of his small sons.

There was a fresh breeze when we cast off, and Musli—who had a dry sense of humour—solemnly asked me to hoist sail. I won't swear that I saw the sedate Musli wink at his wife ; but I did see him look at me, and then at the enormous sail of the *vinta* (which has to be unrolled, like a window-blind, from two long poles) with a twinkle in his dark eye. It seemed that the joke was on me, for I learned afterwards that hoisting sail is a job for three Moros : one hauls the top boom up while his mates unroll the sail and reduce the dead weight by lifting it.

However, I am in the heavyweight class and when I heave something usually moves. . . . To old

Musli's utter amazement, that sail was a good five feet up the tripod mast before he could jump in to help. And Mrs. Musli snapped something at him in crisp Samal which I didn't understand ; but from the chastened expression of her spouse, I rather gathered that the joke was on *him*.

In the exhilaration of the next half-hour I forgot everything but the intoxication of speed. Our stout bamboo mast creaked as the *vinta's* vast square sail bellied out in the breeze, and we were surging through the water at a tremendous pace, twin feathers of spray at the razor-edged prow. Musli's wife managed the sail expertly, with the loose rope's end from the lower boom held in her hand : when the wind freshened, she slacked it out, and drew it taut towards her when we tacked into a gentle breeze. Musli was at the stern, with the steering-paddle in both hands and his weather-eye cocked on the convexity of the graceful sail above his head. Beneath that vast and spreading sheet—which was patterned with Moro zigzags and cubes—the *vinta's* thirty-five-foot hull looked like a slender twig on the water.

Musli's Samal house on the cocoa-nut island swiftly hove in sight—built, as usual, high-up on piles—and we came alongside with the correctness and docility of a liner at a quay. I had watched curiously to see how Musli would stow such a cumbrous stretch of sail. It was the neatest job in the world. While he lowered it gently, his small son—looking very important, of course—wound it up on the lower boom by a cross-piece. They unhooked it from the

hoisting-block and lifted it into its place on the platform of the boat where a couple of hard-wood forks were lashed with rattan to receive it.

Musli's was the neatest, handiest and fastest craft I had ever seen. And from that moment I registered a vow to become the proud possessor of a Moro *vinta*. I want to bring one of these raking clippers of the Philippines all the way to England—and sail rings around the challenge-cup holders of a few really smart yacht-clubs!

With the *vinta* riding saucily at her moorings, Musli led the way into his house. My Moro host evidently believed in doing himself well, for his roomy dwelling was as 'cute as the speed-boat which had commanded my admiration. The approach from the sea was by a miniature pier which he had built, complete with mooring-gear for craft. Thence, we ascended to the house by a flight of steps and willing helpers soon disposed of my stores and kit, under the house-wifely supervision of Mrs. Musli.

The family slept in one big room where the beds were screened with dark blue mosquito-nets and the floor was gay with mats woven in all the colours of the rainbow. I am afraid Mrs. Musli was not exactly impressed by the appearance of my old Army camp-bed when I dragged it out from my gear and set it up for the night. She was much more interested in the tinned food I had brought along with me.

Then we dined.

I remember that dinner very distinctly indeed.

I think I have already said that I had three weeks' rations with me.

After dinner I had only a fortnight's rations.

When Mr. and Mrs. and Master Musli—and their domestic locusts, whom I had foolishly imagined to be ordinary human beings—had finished gorging, I calculated that one week's rations had been put clean out of sight at one meal. Every tin that I opened was methodically and tidily cleaned out. This was a new experience for me. I was accustomed to the etiquette of Philippino households, where the "Americano's" unconsumed food is removed from the table and saved for the next day. I could glumly see a day, fast approaching, when all my good victuals would be represented by rows of empty tins—and I should be reduced to living on the country. If you know anything about Samal food and Samal cooking, you will understand my silent grief: but if their unique menu is, happily, beyond your ken—I mean *cassava*—then I cannot describe it. . . . I am not a literary man: and if I were, I should address my genius to brighter themes. Really, *cassava* calls for the catastrophic pen of one of those Russian novelists whose characters all commit suicide amid the heavy sobs of the reader. So now, if you please, we will change the subject.

Having dined, we all reclined upon the mats on the floor while one of Musli's musicians produced an instrument similar to a xylophone, except that the keys—which he beat with a pair of drumsticks—were made of bamboo.

Its notes were singularly soft, haunting, and soothing.

Then a Moro sang wildly, in the manner of minstrels of olden times—improvising verse after verse in an epic narrative of the deeds of the Moro pirate-kings of the Far East. And the listening men licked their lips, their eyes dilating and half-closing in savage reverie.

Although I could not follow his recitative in the Samal dialect, the minstrel's dramatic gestures were sufficiently eloquent. A sickly lamp flung his moving shadow on the wall of Musli's room—darkened by the fallen dusk of evening—and I thought of the Moro legends of ghosts that guard the dead pirate's booty on Sarangani Island. . . . Like diamonds flashing on a purple robe, clustered stars blazed in the darkling sky : I watched them through the open door that framed a Moro picture of feathery palm-fronds silhouetted against the firmament and the sea.

When the war-chant rose to harsh and unmelodic cadences of martial triumph, I sensed the telegraphic excitement of my rapt companions : and then I thought of our own youth in England, athrill with stirring tales of Drake and Frobisher. . . . Human nature is much the same all the wide world over.

Every evening in Musli's house the minstrels sang and the musician thrummed his native instrument. I loved to listen, stretched at my ease on a woven mat, my pipe between my teeth. There was some

spell in that wild music that appealed to my old adventurous spirit. Often, when I turned in at night, I could faintly hear Musli's friend coaxing strange music from the bamboo keys of his instrument—and fell asleep, like a child to a crooning lullaby.

* * * * *

I was always first astir in the morning—a seeming virtue that was not unconnected with the fact that I could always borrow Musli's gorgeous *vinta*, while he was asleep. I could usually find one of the boys who was game to go with me, and we enjoyed happy hours of fishing and sailing—always returning with two, at least, of the best things in life: plenty of good food and a healthy appetite.

Now, Musli was a sportsman: and I will tell you how, armed with my gun, he performed one of the most astonishing feats of marksmanship that can happen to anybody.

He proposed an excursion to a neighbouring island, for a little duck-shooting, and away we went . . . *whoosh!* . . . on that marvellous *vinta* which I coveted more sinfully every day. Indeed, I was still thinking of her grace and speed long after we had disembarked and came to a wide shallow sheet of water, inland, which was surrounded by sedge and bullrushes.

Taking cover carefully, Musli begged the loan of my gun to have first shot—the lake was alive with ducks. I handed it over without informing Musli that it was loaded with a couple of buckshot cart-

ridges. I thought it would be rather amusing to see what would happen when my old friend loosed off that stuff at a small duck . . . something like sniping a man with an eighteen-pounder field-gun.

I watched him begin to stalk the innocent birds, but so intently did he keep his eye on his quarry that he tumbled into the water and the splash scared them off. Presently, he had another go. This time he stalked a screen of bullrushes that rose from a little island of mud close to the edge of the lake.

Musli raised my gun to his shoulder, took deliberate aim and fired.

One lone duck—indignant, but otherwise unharmed—fled the scene, noisily.

But there was a much louder noise within the bullrushes . . . a squealing and a grunting that struck old Musli dumb with astonishment.

"Pig!" yelled a Moro, splashing through the mud and water and making a rush for the little island, brandishing his bright *parang* above his head. Twice he struck, viciously, and then dragged out a very dead little pig.

Musli had missed his duck and wounded an unlucky porker hidden in the rushes.

"Ah!" said Musli, wringing the seat of his saturated trousers (he had fired both heavily-loaded barrels at once, in his excitement at seeing the duck with the charmed life, and the unexpected recoil caused him to sit down suddenly in the lake), "Ah, very good shot! I shoot fine pig!"

“ Yes,” I said, in my best ironical manner.
“ Bally fluke ! ”

And Musli bowed, smiling. English slang was far too deep for him, and he thought I had paid him a graceful compliment. He looked so proud and happy, and I let him get away with it. He graciously lent me my own gun for a little while, and when we returned in the dusk of evening our boys were carrying a dozen ducks on their slung pole.

After supper, Musli improvised a story of how he shot the pig—a story composed expressly for his admiring spouse—which made the Moro minstrels’ epics of Sarangani’s deeds seem like small cold potatoes. I wish I could remember it all, but the essence of it was something like this :

Seven savage wild pigs suddenly dashed out from the rushes and charged Musli. Coolly standing his ground, he fired both barrels. And they turned and fled incontinently. Several were wounded, though not mortally. There were tracks of blood upon the ground. Noticing among them a plump porker of tender age, Musli thought with great presence of mind : “ Ah, the very thing for supper ! ” Reloading and taking deadly aim at the scampering little pig—which, by this time, must have been about five hundred yards away—Moro Musli dropped it dead in its tracks. He said he considered it the best shot he had ever made.

Old Musli was a cheerful liar. I must have heard him tell this tale a score of times, and, judging by his

increasing enthusiasm, I really think he began to believe it was true.

* * * * *

Musli's sick brother was bad. The calomel I gave him did him good, but immediately he began to feel better he celebrated the occasion by devouring a heavy meal of shell-fish. A fever-patient who does that sort of thing is asking for trouble. I had an urgent message to return to the sick man's bedside. I decided to stay with him for a few days, dose him properly and take good care that he didn't get up to any more fool tricks. The orchid-hunter and manganese-pro prospector who is also family doctor to the adjacent villages, has very little time to lead the gay life, and my hands were pretty full. However, I pulled Musli's brother through, located a valuable deposit of manganese, and collected an interesting species of the orchid. The sad fate of the plants which I gathered for export has already been described: the seas that broke over our *vinta* on the return voyage killed the lot.

The manganese business, however, was carried through to an eminently satisfactory conclusion. It was certainly a rather remarkable coincidence that I located the stuff in a belt of mangroves that almost touched the place where my patient lived!

As far back as 1906, Moros reported finding a heavy black ore of some kind, but the interested parties seem to have done nothing at that time beyond securing samples for investigation. After a few weeks of careful testing on the spot, I was convinced

of the value of the deposit and made a deal with the Moro owners of the land. Work started within a few months, as soon as shipping arrangements had been completed. Bulk samples were sent to the Atlantic coast of the United States and also to Singapore.

This small but valuable atoll off the coast of Tawi-Tawi is ideally situated for the work of development and transportation of material. Steamers can anchor within a stone's-throw of the beach in nine fathoms of water ; and as the locality is land-locked, boats are able to load in any weather.

I signed a contract with the Moros under which they received a stipulated royalty per ton. Labour conditions here were much better than in most parts of Moroland on account of the number of neighbouring Moros who are personally interested in the development of the manganese deposits : the greater the amount of manganese shipped, the richer the royalties for the Moros. This deal meant increased prosperity for the Samal Moros in the portion of the archipelago north-east of Tawi-Tawi. I may say that samples were sent to the biggest manufacturers in the United States who were invited to quote prices on one-hundred-ton lots.

Manganese is, of course, a metallic chemical element and has a wide variety of important commercial uses. It precipitates many metals from solutions of their salts and is employed commercially in the manufacture of special steels.

I am bound to say that the Moros entered into

the spirit of the undertaking handsomely : but their honest engagement in business enterprise is enough to make old Sarangani turn over in his grave.

To a business friend of mine, I once remarked that the evolution of the Moros from piracy to capitalism seemed very strange indeed.

“ Why ? ” he said, and went on writing cheques.

* * * * *

A peep behind the scenes in the villages, where the Samal Moro women pursue their native customs, may remind the philosophic traveller of Bond Street on a sunny afternoon. He may see abundant evidence of a feminine foible which, in London, Paris and New York, is considered very modern indeed : for the Moro woman would not think of being seen, if she is really smart, without the correct tinge of make-up on her face. The fashionable Moro complexion is attained by the use of rice-powder paste daubed thickly all over the face like a mask through which their black eyes and eyebrows peer ; and the modish beauty's teeth are usually blackened with betel-nut.

They think they look charming. I know, because they have told me so—opening that black gash in a smile of presumed enchantment. Well, the details of feminine beauty are a matter of individual taste. . . . *Chacun à son goût.* . . .

For myself, I reserve judgment on Eve's adornment. The sagacious and courteous traveller must be all things to all women. Besides, I know very

well that if the belle of a Moro village unwisely accompanied me for a stroll down Bond Street, she would die of laughing at her first glimpse of rouged mouths and plucked eyebrows . . . because, you see, those are things which are simply not done by the best people in the Sulu Archipelago.

A bevy of Moro beauties (let us say) came down to the beach to see me off when I left, smiling blackly through their rice-powder: and by secret arrangement with Mrs. Musli—who really was a nice little woman—I gave them something to talk about.

All the islanders knew my strong-man stunt of hoisting the big sail of the *vinta* single-handed, and I often did it to amuse them. Musli's brother had a bright idea, and designed to speed the parting guest with a practical joke: he lashed the boom down, stowing the rope almost out of sight, so that when the *Tuan—c'est moi*—heaved, nothing would happen.

He slyly passed the word round, and everybody came to have a good laugh. Mrs. Musli put me wise to the game, and simplified everything by cutting through the rope with a *parang* until only a few strands remained.

Amid half-suppressed giggles from the deluded joker's friends, I grasped the rope and took my stance.

"Heave-ho!" I shouted, and put my back into it.

There was a roar of delight as the sail went up—and I shoved off before any inquisitive spectator

had time to see that the rope had been cut, and not burst by the mighty *Tuan* !

Maybe that story of the *Tuan's* feat of strength has become a classic of the island folk-tales—like the tale of Musli's pig.

As we cast off, the numerous waterways which intersect this group of small islands were dotted with smaller *vintas* which were taking the kiddies to school. I waved to them and they waved back, uttering shrill cries. All the youngsters have to go to school by *vinta*, and it is quite an amusing sight to see them sailing away in the morning.

The Government have been very generous to the Samals in the provision of schools and a good educational system : in consequence, the rising generation can speak English very fairly.

Governor Carl Moore, of the Sulu Archipelago, officially superintends the schools. With infinite tact and kindness, he has gained a firm hold on the confidence and even affection of the modern descendants of the Moro pirates. Wherever I went among them, I heard them speak of him as Father of the Moros.

Mr. Moore supervises all their business transactions. Nobody may transact business with the Moros until " Father " has thoroughly scrutinised all documents and satisfied himself of the *bona-fides* of the parties. Of his splendid work among these primitive people, little is known to the outside world ; but I know that the memory of his wise, beneficent and firm rule will never be forgotten by the passing generation of

Samals, nor by the rising generation who will enjoy most of its fruits. He has transformed them, almost miraculously, from an ignorant, hostile and predatory people to an enlightened and superior race who are rapidly transforming their beautiful little islands into hives of industry.

Soon, the Samal Moros will be producing wealth in substantial quantities. Their increased prosperity and happiness will be a splendid monument to Carl Moore and his good works, the kind of monument that endures long after praise has been forgotten.

* * * * *

The Mohammedanism of the inhabitants of these islands—a religion which, of course, prohibits them from eating the flesh of swine—has a remarkable sequel: droves of wild pig are encountered everywhere, and I have seen them swimming from one island to another. The boars and sows are very bold when their young are threatened. I was sailing a very light *vinta* one day when we met a drove of pigs, swimming. I captured a youngster and took him from the water, squealing blue murder. The old sow, hearing her offspring's S.O.S., turned around and swam straight at our little craft—with murder in her piggy eyes. It were easy enough for her to upset the boat; and I hadn't the heart to shoot her because her family would have certainly starved without their mother. So I dropped the little pig overboard, and we took to our paddles and bolted—routed by a pig! And I'll bet that brave old sow

felt no end of a heroine as she escorted her terrified infant back to the panicky drove, safe and sound.

On the Island of Tindabato, the pig-trails looked as if flocks of sheep were about ; there must have been thousands in the jungle. I believe it would be a paying business to build corrals and drive them in : great numbers could easily be caught in this manner.

The pig was my only talisman to defend me from the pilfering fingers of the Mohammedan Moros who raided my larder. Having suffered their looting for a long time without discovering any means of stopping their game, I suddenly thought of Pig—it was almost a stroke of genius.

After that, I always kept bacon handy—ostentatiously handy—and smeared it over any food that I wanted to keep. The hangdog look of my thievish retainers was a sight for the gods, when they saw me going all over a plump and toothsome duck with a slice of bacon. Though their ugly mouths might water, they dare not eat the bird—as food it was *tabu*. My larder was safe. I congratulated myself that I had beaten them to it.

Unhappily, however, the villains do not eat cigarettes, tobacco and cash. They fleeced me, right and left. I had fallen among thieves with a vengeance. I remember mentioning it to Musli—after keeping it to myself for a long time : I did not want to hurt his susceptibilities by calling his Moros by their proper name.

Musli laughed. “ You should give your valuables

to my wife, to mind for you," he said. " They would not touch anything of hers."

" Thank you, Musli," I replied sadly, " but I wouldn't dream of bothering her. Besides, I haven't got any valuables now."

CHAPTER XI

TORNADO

TWENTY years ago, a naked man was washed ashore at Capiz—on the north coast of Panay, Philippine Islands. “He was more dead than alive, half-crazy, and his blistered bleeding body was turning black. His eyes were glazed. His tongue was so swollen that he couldn’t speak . . .”

According to my friend Colonel Griffiths, of the Philippine Constabulary, that is a description of myself—after being in the sea for forty hours and then spending three days and nights in an open boat. Off Panay, a tornado engulfed and obliterated a fleet of fishing *bancos* and sunk my pearling lugger. There were less than half a dozen survivors among the men, of whom I was one. The *Manila Times* printed a long circumstantial account of the wreck—but the survivors’ tale has never been told. It is no exaggeration to say that, for years afterwards, I wanted nothing so much as to forget all about it. Perhaps it deserves a place in this *Odyssey* which shows—so far—that although I had a few close calls in the perilous waters around the Philippine Islands, luck

was on my side. The best of luck won't hold for ever.

* * * * *

It was my third pearling cruise, although some folk say that the third time's lucky.

It certainly did seem that my luck was in on that spring morning in April when I sailed from Iloilo for the pearling grounds on the north-east end of the island of Panay. I had a little coral atoll there, virtually my own, on which my headquarters were situated very comfortably indeed. And we were taking a fair amount of shell. I was thinking, with great satisfaction, that my next trip to Iloilo would be to deposit my pearls with the bank. It was a pleasant thought, and I derived considerable joy from it—joys of anticipation. Maybe it is a good thing, a wise dispensation of Providence, that we don't always know what is coming to us.

When I arrived, everything was going like clock-work, and everybody was happy. I had good quarters, good men, and as fine a little pearling-lugger—her name, by the way, was *Culion*—as any sailor could wish for: I had already had my share of typhoons and *nortadas*, and *Culion* had proved her mettle splendidly, for the worse the weather, the better she seemed to stand up to it. We were all very proud of her.

Our atoll was surrounded by the usual coral reef, and there was a tiny lagoon inside just big enough for comfortable anchorage. My diver, Sinforoso, and all my crew were married men, and I had built



THIS DIVER HAS JUST HANDED OVER A BIG NET-BAG OF PEARL-SHELL

He has come up for a "breather"

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decent shacks for them ashore. They had their wives with them, they cultivated their own little gardens, and reared chickens and pigs. Upon the whole, I don't think you would have found, anywhere, a happier or more contented family of pearlers.

From the general outlook, it seemed that this ideal life would continue indefinitely. Every morning at sunrise we were out prospecting. The patches of shell, though good, were usually rather small, and my men were quick willing workers. I always tried to have a fresh patch ready for them to begin work on, as soon as they had cleaned up the old one, and work went briskly on—from sunrise to sunset. Sinforoso would come up for the usual breather, unscrewing the face-piece of his diving-helmet, and the men at the pump would have a spell—chatting and smoking. Then, down he would go again. We worked on steadily for weeks. My store of pearl increased, though we made no sensational finds. However, we were doing very well.

One Saturday afternoon, when it was time to knock off for the day—for we kept our Saturday afternoons and Sundays as holidays, just the same as if we were on a shore job in some big city—Sinforoso came up and begged me to shoot a turtle for our Sunday dinner. There were plenty bobbing up on the surface, all around. I had become quite an expert at the art of shooting turtles—which isn't so easy as you might think.

The turtle always seemed to me as if he were consumed with curiosity as to what is going on all

around him. When he comes up for a breather, it is quite comical to see the way he cranes his snaky neck and peers around—as if he has an urgent appointment with somebody who is abominably late. That is the moment to let drive at him. I aimed low at his neck, so as to pierce the shell, and rarely missed. A shot turtle invariably sinks like a stone—and that is where Sinforoso always came into the picture.

I picked up my Krag carbine, as he pointed to a fine fellow stretching his neck not far away, and fired. Turtle and diver disappeared into the sea, and we sat down and waited for our Sunday dinner to be brought up.

Presently, however, the diver signalled to us for a buoy—and it was evident that he had found something more interesting than a dead turtle. Whenever he found a rich patch of shell, Sinforoso would signal for a buoy to be thrown overboard: these buoys have a small anchor attached, and they are used to mark the spot.

After nearly two hours down on the sea-bed, Sinforoso brought up about sixty pairs of heavy shell which were rich in pearls—worth, I estimated, about £200. We worked enthusiastically on our find, until darkness set in and compelled us to stop. Incidentally, we forgot all about the turtle I had shot.

“Sinforoso,” I said, with a quiet chuckle, as we were going back to the lagoon, tired and happy. “What about our Sunday dinner, eh? You villain—you left it down there!”

But the diver only grinned.

“Never mind dinner, master!” he said, eyeing the rich cargo of our lugger. “Never mind dinner when we get plenty pearl!”

O Mammon!

Well, that certainly was some patch of shell. It was the richest I had found, so far. The shell was big, heavy stuff—weighing about six hundred pairs to the ton. As for those lovely pearls . . . well, it’s no use talking about them, because they all went back to their bed in the bottom of the sea.

Our luck lasted for a few more days. We were working early and late. We thought we were getting rich quick. I called that place Tom Tiddler’s Ground. I was happy as a schoolboy on holiday. Even the weather was kind to us—up to a point—though it was intensely hot. My strong-box on the lugger was packed with pearl. I would look at my hoard, and hug myself. Again and again, I congratulated myself. . . . “Well, we *have* struck it lucky this time!” . . . I could have hugged Sinforoso every time he came up. But it were high time those pearls were transferred to the bank for safe-keeping, and I had to tell my men to make preparations for our trip to Iloilo. I only intended to stay at Iloilo for a few hours—no longer than was actually necessary to deposit the pearls in my bank. We were all aching to get back to work again, to fill the strong-box again with the precious stuff, to keep going while the going was so good.

Fortunately, I refused the request of some of the

women to accompany us on the trip to Iloilo. They were rather keen on a little jaunt, just for a change. But I was in a hurry, and I couldn't be bothered with women. I remember that some of them took it rather badly and sulked. . . . I remembered that later, and I am prepared to bet that those disgruntled women will remember what my refusal meant, as long as they live.

There was the usual delay in getting off—farewells being said, and wives giving a thousand and one orders for commissions to be executed in Iloilo, shopping and lord-knows-what. However, we sailed at last.

So as to lose no opportunity, I had planned to spend an hour or two working our patch, *en route*, and to leave for Iloilo in the evening instead of returning to the atoll. Again, my luck held amazingly: Sinforoso went down and soon reported that he had found a depression in the bottom which was lined with shell. It was impossible, he said, to clean it right out—unless we anchored there for the night and put in a couple of hours' work to-morrow.

Now, I dislike altering my plans. I demurred, but Sinforoso most earnestly begged me to stay. He was a splendid worker, and as keen as mustard—the sort of fellow you don't like to discourage.

“All right,” I said.

* * * * *

The day had been hot and breathless. There was a sullen haze in the atmosphere that should have warned me of dirty weather to come. But I was

thinking of pearls . . . pearls . . . pearls . . . And I had left my barometer in Iloilo to be corrected.

A tornado was approaching. It was fifteen miles in width—as I afterwards learned—and in the position where *Culion* anchored for the night, we were in the dead-centre of it. Anchored all around us were numerous big fishing *bancos*, with hundreds of men on board. In the next few hours they were to be engulfed in the raging seas. More than three hundred were drowned. Indeed, so far as I know, myself and the four men of my crew who crawled ashore at Capiz on the north coast of Panay, five days later, were the only survivors.

We had no idea of what was coming to us, as we lay about the lugger's deck, smoking, until the uncommon "closeness" of the sultry air became so oppressive that it disturbed my dreams of pearls. It was different from the ordinary heat of a tropical evening. I began to look around anxiously. I didn't like the "feel" of it, and ardently wished I had my barometer.

"Sinforoso!" I said, and the diver looked up lazily—he was half-asleep, after a heavy day's work.

"Very hot!" he sighed.

"I don't like the look of things," I remarked.

The Philippino crew stirred from their lounging attitudes and followed my gaze skywards, and then to the lowering shroud of haze on the horizon where the sea seemed to lay dead. Nobody spoke.

Culion was anchored on the chain.

A hot puff of wind came across the sea, dispelling

the still breathlessness of the air. Then I knew what was coming.

“Stand by!” I shouted. “Sinforoso!”

“Master?”

“Get ready to slacken out plenty of anchor-chain. And——”

Then the roar of the approaching hurricane drowned all other sound. From the distance, it came in a thin high scream, deepening, as it drew nearer to an open-throated roar. Putting my hands to my mouth I yelled to the crew to lower our second anchor. By putting his ear to my lips, Sinforoso managed to hear the order. After that I do not remember hearing anything but the awful roaring and shrieking of the tornado; but I could see the doomed fishermen, panic-stricken, on board their *bancos*. . . . The sudden change from breathless calm and utter stillness, to the crash of smashing seas and the vicious howl of the wind, was stupefying. The deafening tornado lashed the sea into angry waves that raced towards our little lugger hungrily, threatening unescapable destruction.

Smothering green seas broke all over us, and the lugger tore at her anchors like some maddened tethered animal. We were flung in all directions, grabbing wildly at spars and rigging, half-drowned and stupid.

The Philipinos were yelling to each other. I could see their mouths opening and shutting—but like faces on the silent screen at the cinema. The increasing uproar of the tempest was utterly appal-

ling, like the shrieks and yells of a million souls in hell. . . . The wind tore at us. It filled our nostrils and lungs so that we could hardly breathe, bowing our heads and gasping. Spray lashed us like small shot, stinging our cheeks, blinding our eyes. We hung on to anything we could feel with our hands, groping in foaming cascades of sea-water that drenched and beat us down to our knees.

Culion was fighting her last game fight. Waves buried her. She came staggering up, and was buried again. But she was doomed. I knew it. In the end, the tornado would smash her. Mind you, the worst was yet to come—when the storm-centre reached us. Every minute the tempest was growing in violence.

It was half-past nine in the evening when the tornado struck us, and we fought for our lives for two hours and a half. At eleven o'clock there was a temporary lull. And it seemed that it was only by a miracle that *Culion* was still afloat. We were dizzy with the buffeting we had received, and shaken to our toes. I served out some very stiff tots of rum to the Philippinos, and explained to the poor devils that there was worse to come. We had staggered down to the lugger's cabin to talk, because, in spite of the lull, the din on deck was deafening. I detailed the three strongest men in the crew to stand by the anchors with me.

They drank their rum, and went to their stations.

On deck it was impossible to stand upright. We had to crawl on all-fours, and I had rigged double

life-lines to help us along. But even with these aids, so terrific was the force of the wind that it took us more than five minutes to crawl along that forty feet of wind-swept deck. We lay by the anchors, gasping, unable to hear each other shout, scarcely able to breathe although there was a little shelter at the bows. No man could endure the terrific pressure of that wind for more than half an hour at a time, and we stood-by in watches.

Culion had ridden out the first part of the storm miraculously. I had hardly dared to hope that it wouldn't sink her, stout little ship though she was. But she had strained at her two cables so heavily that some of her seams had opened and she was leaking dangerously when the lull came.

Her end was very near.

I had six men on the windlass and three pulling in the slack of the cable, when the lull in the storm ended abruptly. The storm-centre smote us. The tornado broke on us again, from the opposite quarter, with more appalling violence than before and a hideous din. . . . Poor little *Culion* plunged crazily, started to drift, and came broadside on to the wind. Over she heeled at a terrifying angle. The slant of the deck sent us flying into the scuppers. Sea after sea broke over us. The lugger was shuddering, still heeling over—farther and farther. We managed to cast loose the lashings of the small dory we carried on deck—our puny lifeboat !

Culion's port bulwark was under water.

I knew she would never right herself again.

I stared down into the raging sea at my feet. My hands were clenched around a taut rope by the main mast. *Culion* was going down under me, yet I was hanging on to her. Maybe I should have gone down with her—for I hardly knew what I was doing, then—if the tornado hadn't snatched me from the canted deck, as a fly is blown off a wall. It broke me from my frantic hold on that rope and hurled me headlong into the sea.

I sank deep, but forced my way to the seething surface with bursting lungs. The flying spindrift nearly drowned me as I swam, and I had to keep my head almost under water.

I knew the dory had floated off, and that she must be somewhere near, to leeward. I struck out mightily, in a kind of frenzy I suppose—but it was pitch dark now. In that heavy sea I was like a cork—rising and falling dizzily on every wave until I began to experience giddiness and nausea. I spouted sea-water through my nose. Whizzing spindrift enveloped me. I thought I heard voices calling. Hallucination. Nothing could be heard above the frightful shrieks and howls of the wind. Again it seemed to me like the cries of lost souls in torment. Odd and terrifying fancies began to form in my brain, while I swam mechanically—swimming—treading water—swimming—treading water—my staring, smarting eyes seeking vainly to pierce the darkness, looking wildly for a little dory.

I felt that I had to keep on the move, to keep on swimming—the surging water in my ears was better

than that damnable screaming of the wind. Never had I heard anything like it before ; and I devoutly pray it may never be my fate to hear it again. . . . My hand touched a man's leg ! Passing my hand up to his shoulder, I found that he was clinging desperately to the dory—with more than half a dozen others. But I did not know how many were there until day broke. It was useless to try to speak. The noise was too great. And the night was black-dark.

I just hung on for hours and hours. Sometimes the dory turned over and ducked us—but we hung grimly on all night. And when I say we hung on, I mean it. We were not lightly clinging to a drifting craft. The tornado drove that dory through the water at racing speed—so fast, indeed, that it often threatened to break from our grasp. After an hour or two, my hands began to bleed.

Just before dawn, we sighted the Gigantes Light to the south. The isles of Gigantes are off the northeasterly point of Panay—and I knew that the tornado had carried us in a half-circle from the spot where *Culion* had foundered.

I was terribly exhausted when daylight broke, but the wind had begun to slacken and at sunrise it had almost dropped.

It was then that I counted the heads of the survivors of my crew—eight of us, all told, were clinging to the capsized craft. There were set and tragic faces, with the fear of God written on them, drawn with physical suffering and terror. One of them was Sinforoso—the diver.

We exchanged no greetings. Our lips were cracked and parched. Our tongues were swollen. I noticed, for the first time, that I was naked, except for a tattered undervest. I suppose my other garments had been torn off me—but I never knew.

One of the survivors was a mere lad, named Patricio. He hadn't the strength of a man. Perhaps in that horror of darkness and weltering waves and shrieking winds, fear had lent him the strength of desperation. In the daylight, in the very early dawn, Patricio turned his wan face to me. He was hanging on to the other side of the dory. Patricio just looked at me, uttered an unhuman sound—something like the cry of an animal—and let go.

He disappeared, and the dory drifted onward.

Nobody said a word.

Soon we began to suffer from cramp—excruciating agonies. It was probably caused by the salt water we had swallowed: it had been driven into our mouths, and up our nostrils, and into our ears, all through the night. I was miserably ill, racked with pain. The cramp was accompanied by violent diarrhoea and vomiting.

Somehow, we turned the dory over—weak as we were—so that one or two of us could climb in, while the others clung to her gunwales: she wouldn't float with more than two aboard. We took it in turns to have a spell in the dory. Even this small relief from our sufferings came to an early end, for a nasty sea got up and the only way we could keep the dory afloat was to turn her keel up and hang

on the best way we could. She had shipped a lot of water, and though we tried to bale her out, you can't do much with your bare hands. . . . So we turned her upside down, and used her as a raft.

As the sun climbed up into the heavens, we eagerly looked for a sight of a sail. But there was nothing to be seen but water. And we drifted on, blistered by the tropical sunrays and tortured by thirst.

Once we were attacked by a flock of gulls—and this was something new in my experience of the sea. I had never heard of gulls attacking man. But they certainly did go for us—screeching and using their beaks viciously. They drew blood from a couple of my Philipinos, and became so bold that I managed to grab one and kill him—smashed his head on the keel. When I flung his body into the sea, the others swooped down upon it and allowed us to drift on without further molestation.

We began to talk a little among ourselves, but not much. Our voices sounded harsh and strange. I hardly recognised my own. And I noticed that those poor fellows' eyes had a queer glassy stare: it lent them a very odd and uncanny appearance.

The one thing we never mentioned was—sharks.

We were drifting, now, in shark-infested waters. Probably nobody cared to mention it. Or, maybe nobody cared very much whether they lived or died, then. . . . Exhaustion, hunger, thirst, illness, and fear, had left us in a sub-normal condition mentally. There comes a point, when suffering

extreme privation, at which even the inborn instinct of self-preservation slackens—seems hardly worth while. I may as well add that—for some unexplainable reason—we never saw a single shark.

The sun went down, dusk was swiftly followed by another long night of hell. At dawn I counted heads again. I wondered if any had slipped away during the night—like poor little Patricio. But we were all present, all hanging on to the water-logged dory—still alive, but that was all.

Looking at those ghastly faces, those glazed and hopeless eyes, the cracked swollen lips, and the bloody lacerated hands that clung wildly to the dory as it rose and fell on the waves, I remembered the old, old cry in the wilderness . . . *How long, O Lord, how long?*

I began to talk to them, though my throat hurt damnably :

“ We are between Jintotolo and Panay now. See ! The tide is carrying us toward the big island. That’s the north coast range. Look ! It shows up clearly in the morning light. And the sea is going down. Well, that’s good now. . . . ”

They just stared with their glassy eyes, in a state of lethargy.

Early in the afternoon one of them began to behave strangely.

Hanging on to the bows of the dory, he let go and permitted himself to sink. Coming up under the stern, he grabbed hold again—and worked his way along the side to his original position at the bow.

Then he repeated the performance—snarling and grimacing.

Poor chap ! His reason had given way. He cut the most extraordinary antics, and made horrible noises. We could do nothing for him. It was as much as we could do to cling to our bobbing, rolling craft. Later in the afternoon he flung himself backwards off the dory, flailing his arms and legs and screaming. We never saw him again.

* * * * *

At about eight o'clock that evening the sea became so placid that I saw a chance of baling the dory thoroughly. I detailed the lightest man to climb into the boat and handed him my vest to use as a baler. The rest of us leaned over the side and used our hands.

It was a long and weary job, but it seemed to put a little heart into those miserable wretches—gave them something to think about besides madness and thirst and death. In an hour the thing was done—and we climbed aboard, one by one, and very gingerly.

Thinking it over, I reckon that would have been about nine o'clock in the evening. *Culion* foundered in the tornado, two nights before, at eleven-thirty. So we must have been in the water for about forty hours. . . .

A few minutes after we had climbed into the dory, we began to shiver. While we were in the water, we had not suffered from cold. But now we were chilled to the marrow. We huddled together,

cuddling each other for warmth, pressing close to each other's bodies. Thus we spent another miserable night—though we could doze, without fear of drowning.

From dozing, we fell into a sleep like death ; and when I woke, I was embracing Sinforoso in the midst of a heap of sleeping men—all huddled together like a litter of pups. I had to grin when I found old Sinforoso's head upon my shoulder and my arm around his neck. That was my first grin for a long, long time. . . . But subsequent events soon took that smile off my face.

At first, the warmth of the morning sun was very pleasant. But as noon drew near, blistering hot, I began to realise, in anticipation, some of the tortures that awaited me—a naked white man, exposed to the full blaze of a tropical sun. It blistered me from head to heel. I plunged overboard to cool my tormented body in the sea. The blisters broke, and the brine nearly drove me mad . . . like a fool, I forgot about that until I was into the water on the second day. My skin was in a foul mess.

A small steamer passed us, but without a sign. We tried to shout. You never heard such weird noises—sort of hoarse feeble croaks. I stood up and waved a bit of a torn shirt. The steamer glided on—it looked very near—it just glided on, and disappeared. I sat down, and gritted my teeth. It was pretty awful, more lonesome than ever—when there was nothing left but a thinning trail of smoke on the horizon.

But there was Panay in sight. Sometimes we seemed to be drifting to the shore ; and then we seemed to drift back again. It was as though we should never get anywhere. Then I had a big idea. I had noticed a plank nailed, as a fender, on the dory's side. It was a big plank, about nine feet long and six inches wide, and only half an inch thick . . . easily broken, I thought. We prised it off and broke it into three lengths—there we had three paddles, of a sort !

We set to work paddling the dory towards that distant shore, but the tide beat us. . . . And on the fourth day, another one of the crew went mad. He suddenly set upon the man next to him—screaming and gibbering and frothing at the mouth. We dragged him off, and tried to hold him down. But he had the strength of a madman. The poor devil broke away from us, and hurled himself into the sea. I saw him sink, and he never came up again. Maybe a shark had him.

From this point my memory is rather hazed.

I remember little, except pain—stabbing, burning pain in every one of the open sores that covered my limbs and body ; and alternating spells of sickening numbness, but the pain always returned. Maybe it was my brain, and not my body, that was numb when the pain seemed to leave me.

But I think I liked that numb sensation least of all. It felt horrible. It made me think of blood-poisoning, paralysis, and God-knows-what . . . when I was capable of thinking at all.

I must have been delirious on the last night. I think we all were.

I saw Dream-islands which we passed irrevocably—as though drawn by some unseen Power that would not permit us to land and end our sufferings. Hundreds of people lined the shore, people with sad faces who waved to us, as if in pity. Some had baskets of luscious fruit and casks of crystal-clear spring-water, and they beckoned us. . . . And I saw Dream-ships loom up and draw near, and nearer . . . but they never stopped . . . there were men on board who looked at us stonily . . . the officer on the bridge looked straight ahead, though I screamed and screamed.

* * * * *

In lucid moments we paddled foolishly until we collapsed and lay where we had fallen, too weak to move. We were dumb. None of us could speak a word. Our swollen tongues would only permit us to make inarticulate sounds.

One evening, dumb, half-blind, and incredulous, we felt our little dory grind her keel in the sandy shore of Panay Island.

We fell overboard into the shallow water and crawled up the beach. I fell on my face and lay still. I was conscious, but without volition.

Some fishermen found us and carried us up to their shacks by a fishing *barrio*, near Capiz. I know they were very good to us, but I received their ministrations in a kind of dream. They asked me to write a note to Colonel Griffiths, who commanded

the Philippine Constabulary in Panay. I scrawled on a sheet of paper :

Wreck. Help. Very ill. Burdett.

When it was handed to the Colonel it was stained with blood.

Griffiths was an old friend of mine. He came like a shot, bringing beef-extracts, brandy, and everything he could think of. And he sat with me all night, giving me teaspoonfuls of nourishment and spirits.

I lay where they had put me, on an army cot, too weak and ill to stir a finger. And when the orderlies came to carry me to the Government launch, they could not move me without cutting the canvas, where it had adhered to the sores on my body. . . . I think I must have fainted.

I have hazy recollections of the first day or two in hospital at Iloilo—perhaps the more vivid of these concerns the earnest efforts of some husky American hospital-stewards who detached those bits of canvas from my blisters. . . . And then, they bandaged me most artistically, simply rolled me up in bandages. It was much easier putting those bandages on, than getting them off again. They stuck . . . and I think I know how the rabbit felt when it was being skinned.

I was told that the doctor gave me forty-eight hours to live, when he had examined me.

And that was twenty years ago.

Anyway, he was a stout fellow.

They packed me off to the Civil Hospital in Hong-

Kong, where I had to undergo special electrical treatment over the whole surface of my body. I was suffering from inflammation of the nerves—an exceedingly painful complaint that did not yield to treatment until two years had elapsed since the wreck of my pearling lugger *Culion*.

* * * * *

I must hand out the joke on one of the Hong-Kong doctors—a breezy kind of bird who really had very little to do with my case, as he only appeared on the scene when I was convalescent.

As I was about to leave hospital, he gave me a few words of parting advice—something like this :

“Very interesting case, yours—very. H’m! Take care of yourself, now. I remember a similar case we had in the hospital. An Imperial Chinese Customs officer. And he was very bad. H’m! But we pulled him through, though his nerves had all gone to blazes. He was all right when we discharged him, but . . . Say! You don’t mind me speaking plainly? Well, I’ll just give you the same advice I gave him. . . .” Here the doctor went through the motions of raising a glass to his lips—what we call bending-the-elbow. . . . “You cut it out, my friend. If you don’t, it’ll be your funeral. Go on the water-wagon.”

I thanked him with, I hope, becoming gravity and humility, but the nursing-sister in charge of the ward was in convulsions of silent mirth behind his back.

He had mixed me up with another patient in the

same ward—a planter, whose thirst for Scotch whisky had led—like the path of glory—toward the grave.

* * * * *

Often, during those convalescent days, my mind would hark back to my happy pearling-grounds off Panay, where it had seemed that I was the luckiest fellow in the world. I thought of the rich store of pearls I had taken aboard the lugger when we sailed for Iloilo . . . now in Davy Jones' locker, for keeps. Thinking it over, in hospital, I often wondered if many other prosperous men had ever been cleaned out so suddenly and thoroughly as I was cleaned out by that shrieking tornado? My worldly possessions were reduced, in a few short and hectic hours, to the remains of an undershirt.

Well, it's all part of the game.

CHAPTER XII

THE WONDERLAND OF MINDANAO

THE Island of Mindanao is a wonderland of undeveloped wealth.

It is no idle phrase of picturesque exaggeration: Wonderland is the word that always occurs to me when I think of what I have seen in its almost unexplored and sparsely settled territory.

I have explored in the Dutch Indies. I have trailed through the Federated Malay States. And I know the Philippines from north to south, and from east to west. But I have never seen land with brighter prospects than the great Island of Mindanao: here are tens of thousands of beautiful valleys, richly fertile, awaiting brains and capital to turn them into money—ideal sites for rubber, rice, hemp, and cocoa-nut plantations, for instance.

Mindanao cocoa-nut palms bear in their fourth year; in the seventh they are a paying proposition to the grower; and in eleven years they earn big dividends.

In the Gulf of Davao there are a number of American and Philippino emigrants at work clearing the valleys—and nowhere else in the Philippines is money so plentiful—but this is a mere scratching

of the surface. Handsome returns are already coming in from the harvesting of their great hemp and cocoa-nut plantations.

For many years I have explored the deep forests of Luzon, Negros, and the Visayan Islands: but these are easily excelled by the forests of Mindanao, where some of the greatest stands of lumber in the world await exploitation—virgin forests of the finest class of lumber, close to water transportation.

I have seen the rich rice-fields of Pangasinan, in Central Luzon, and was duly impressed by them; but the Cotabato Valley of Mindanao stands alone in this respect. Rice is grown all the year round: reaping and planting go on simultaneously in adjoining fields, and the productivity is wonderful. There are no wet and dry seasons: some months are a little drier than others, and there is nothing to interrupt work in the fields.

I have already mentioned the magnificent Mindanao cocoa-nut palms. A planter showed me his figures relating to a new plantation of trees from three to four years old: twenty per cent were yielding between thirty and forty nuts per tree per year. Fifteen-year-old palms were each producing their hundreds. The Davao sun-dried copra is of superlative quality, and commands an exceptional price above the product of any other part of the Philippine Islands. I think it is probable that Mindanao will become the greatest copra-producing district in the Philippines—as it is already the greatest producer of high-grade hemp in the world.



THIS ROAD THROUGH A MINDANAO PLANTATION IS BORDERED BY MAGNIFICENT THREE-YEAR-OLD COCOA-NUT PALMS

PUBLIC LIBRARY,
SOUTHFIELDS,

The United States of America must look to Mindanao for supplies of rubber if—as is the dream of the great rubber-manufacturers of the States—it is to be grown under the Flag.

Para rubber is growing strongly, and in increasing quantities, from Basilan, on the west, to the Davao Gulf, in the south. The Basilan plantation grows Para rubber; but both Para and Castellao are grown freely in the Lais Valley of the Gulf of Davao.

The fruit of the Castellao tree is a titbit that no Mindanao crow can resist—and his trick of stealing it and spilling the seeds far and wide has had a curious sequel, for the Castellao tree is now found growing in the jungle. If there is anywhere in the world where you really can “watch things grow,” then that place is the island of Mindanao. America has the ideal nurseries there to supply the rubber market. The stuff is simply waiting to be fetched.

Unfortunately, Mindanao has its own political troubles in the more or less unsettled state of the Moro Provinces. The Moros resent any attempt at government by the Philipinos, though they were happy enough under American military control when General Leonard Wood and, later, General Pershing, held the reins in their hands. This is a delicate question, and I feel certain that there is only one way to deal with it: the Moro Provinces should be under the direct administration of picked Americans of the type of the late Captain Johnson—for many years Governor of the Agusan Province—and Major Fort, the well-known Constabulary Officer.

These officers were respected and trusted alike by the Moros and the Philipinos, and held the balance between the tribes with strict impartiality and tempered justice.

Every Province should be governed by an American. Judges and provincial inspectors of the Constabulary should all be Americans. And there are not nearly enough Americans teaching in the Mindanao schools "to train the young idea"—which is of supreme importance. The schools require young American masters of the best type, capable of inspiring the youngsters with clean, manly ideals.

I am convinced that the Moro Provinces would respond to direct American control as naturally as they resent—and, when possible, forcibly resist—all attempts at Philippino domination. The Moros have licked the Philipinos too often, and too easily, to entertain any serious idea of taking orders from them—except under compulsion, which can only exist while the Philippino official is backed up by the bayonets of the Dough-boys. They would prefer to be under direct American orders. Politically, the situation seems very similar—though, of course, on a miniature scale—to one aspect of the problem of the government of modern India: a martial race looks askance at any attempt to place them under the political control of timid non-military neighbours, who must rely, in the last resort, upon a foreign nation for armed support; but they will salute the British Raj from whom they have had hard knocks in the field. The Moros never knew

what it was to have a sound hiding until the American Dough-boys handed them an exquisite packet. . . . And they salute the Stars and Stripes with all the goodwill in the world. A good fighting-man is usually a good sportsman.

Lest some kindly critic may imagine that I am airing a pet theme on the Americanisation of the Moro Provinces, I had better say at once that the theme is not mine at all. I am doing my best to air the views of Moros whom I have met and lived with: it is always good to have the views of the other fellow, and swart descendants of the old corsairs have often said to me:

“Tell the Americanos!”

Well, now I have spilled it.

But there are times, even now, when the Moro on the war-path has to be taken seriously. In 1927, I saw a new speed-launch for the commander of constabulary at Sulu. She is a staunch little craft, thirty-six feet in length, with a couple of 25-35 h.p. engines, and named *Lieutenant La Roche*—in memory of an officer who was killed in a recent fight with Moros on the island of Lugus, Sulu.

Sarangani's modern prototypes lack little of that old villain's insolent truculence. A band of them gather in a *cotta*—a kind of Moro fort or stockade—and issue threats and demands to the civil authorities. Of course, they are always routed out by the constabulary. There is a short, sharp scrap, the *cotta* is demolished, and the Moros get a licking. But they are soon at it again, somewhere else. And

so the game goes merrily on. It seems likely to continue indefinitely.

If America eventually grants complete independence to the Philippine Islands, there is no doubt that these fighting Moros will prove a grave menace.

But it was in the days of the Spanish Occupation that the Lanao Moros were at the height of their warlike powers. The Spaniards were badly punished and cut about on their arduous journeys between Ilagan and Lake Lanao—where the bulk of their stores were hauled up to Lanao from the coast by ox-trains, and by gangs of men labouring as beasts of burden. Their straggling convoys, cumbrous and slowly-moving, were easily cut up by the Moros—and the armed Spanish escorts were very roughly handled in some of those skirmishes.

The Spaniards tried attacking their *cottas* on the banks of the lake, with iron-clad launches, but this made little impression on them. When the Americans occupied the Philippines, they found the Moros a very hard nut to crack ; and it was not until the United States put a well-equipped army into the field that the scions of old Sarangani were apparently conquered.

I say “ apparently.”

Because the moment America’s troops were withdrawn and Philippine constabulary replaced them, up bobbed the Moros again—as fresh as paint and full of fight as ever ! It is my considered opinion that there is something in the blood of the Moro that makes it physically impossible for him to become

a peaceful and law-abiding member of society. He behaves himself just so long as he is looking down the business-end of an American gun. At other times—if the League of Nations will forgive me for saying so—nothing will prevent him from following his own lusty inclinations and having a fight when he feels like it. He respects and admires the American soldier, but openly displays his contempt for the Philippine Constabulary and for the Philipinos generally—in exactly the same way that the native fighting races of North-west India have learned to respect the British soldier without disguising their contempt for the non-military clans and classes of Bengal and the south.

Neither Spaniards nor Philipinos have ever succeeded in repressing the raiding proclivities of these Moros, whose sires flew the Jolly Roger of old Sarangani. Their raids on the Visayan ports, as far north as Fuga Moros, were a feature of the Spanish *régime* in recent times. They succeeded in firmly establishing themselves on the island of Cuyo—in the Cantandianes group of islands—which they used as a base for their war-boats and raided selected points of the Visayas with the old-time piratical *élan*. They landed at Bangui, on the north coast of Luzon, and sacked and destroyed two churches.

It is their proud boast that the Philipinos have never conquered them: and the Moros disclaim Philipino authority absolutely. Rule by conquest is the only form of authority which these bold warriors recognise.

“It was the American troops who conquered us,” they say, very truly, “not the Philipinos—and we are not going to be governed by them.”

That is why Northern Mindanao is continually seething with latent passions. It is a human volcano, and its periodical eruptions are excessively unhealthy for anybody who happens to be on the spot. The future outlook in Mindanao is not promising. When America grants self-government to the Philippine Islands and the reins of administration are taken over by the Philipinos themselves, the Moros will certainly rise in fierce revolt. And I believe they are thoroughly capable of re-conquering the whole of Northern Mindanao : and holding it, for years.

There is an alternative :

America might retain control of Mindanao, permitting the Moros to govern themselves—but under American guidance, backed by American troops. I believe this plan would work smoothly and well—and as I have said, the Moros themselves have asked for it.

* * * * *

The tribes of Mindanao are certainly a mixed lot, and their pagan wickedness calls—not infrequently—for the policy which is known as treating 'em rough. I am afraid that the pacific elegancies of Geneva—admirable as they must be—wouldn't cut much ice down the Gulf of Davao among the Moros, Belangs, Sanjilis, Manobos and Bagobos. This heathen horde carry six-foot spears and big

butchering knives—and not for ornament either. Their respect for a Foreign Secretary's gold-mounted fountain-pen—thrown into the balance of peace or war—would be absolutely *nil*. But their most respectful attention may be instantly won by a stick of dynamite, or the blued-steel muzzle of a .455 calibre Colt. It's a great pity, but there it is. Personally, I am a man of peace, and I'll do my level best, at any time, to try to beat anybody to the Olive Branch. . . . But not down the Gulf of Davao.

I have met all these ruffians, passing up the Davao Gulf.

North of Mailta are the Manobos and Bagobos, with a sprinkling of Sanjilis. Southwards, towards Sarangani, there are more Manobos and Belangs with Sanjilis and Moros. The Governor of Cotabato has made a very wise law debarring the Moros and Sanjilis from trading in the mountains. Along the coast, they are, more or less—generally less—under Government control ; but all trading in the interior is forbidden to them on account of their merciless exploitation of the Belangs, whom they had robbed and persecuted for generations, before the American Occupation.

Nor may the Belangs be regarded as peaceful folk—as you will presently see. Personally, I was never much affected by the snivelling of the Belangs. They don't like fighting in the open on equal terms : but if a crowd of them can get a defenceless man where they want him, they will cut his throat with great *élan* and go down his pockets.

Mr. Bolton, a Governor of Davao, is numbered among their victims. They found him asleep, one sunny afternoon, enjoying a *siesta* in the shade of a cocoa-nut palm ; and his friend Mr. Christian was sleeping beside him. They were set upon with spears and knives and butchered where they lay. Bolton and Christian were both armed, and the Belangs knew it : they were taking no risks, not even with two lone men, and neither of them had a ghost of a chance to touch the butt of his pistol before the Belang spears were deep in their flesh. . . . It was a foul business, and even worse is the story of the murder of Mr. Gear, who was in charge of the new plantation at Caluman.

There are many different accounts of the details of this outrage, and I have reconstructed the crime on the evidence of three independent witnesses, who told me a very similar story.

There was a dispute concerning the price of the crop which was about to be harvested, and it was Gear's job to fix terms and settle the matter. He agreed—unwisely, in my opinion—to go to the Belangs and discuss the terms. He ought to have made the Belangs come to him. By going to them, he “lost face”—as the Chinese say. It is a fine point, but an important one—in negotiating with natives. You must hold the initiative, and keep it. I very much doubt if those cowardly ruffians would have dared even to threaten him in his own plantation.

However, he went into their country, accompanied

by a Philippino assistant, and the palaver soon took an ugly, acrimonious turn. The Belangs began to threaten—a whole mob of them had only two men to deal with, and there were no white witnesses present. Gear carried his revolver, and the Philippino had a shot-gun. When the threats were angrily repeated and actual violence was imminent, Gear's right hand went to his pistol-butt, but he wasn't quick enough on the draw. A heavy Belang knife, like a butcher's cleaver, chopped his arm off. Game as you like, though almost fainting with pain and loss of blood, Gear went for his gun with the other hand. And they chopped his other arm off, jeering at him with savage yells.

The Caluman River runs close by this spot, and Gear booted the nearest Belang clean into it. They knocked him down. He fought with his bloody stumps and his feet. He was a brave man and he died game. They thrust him through with a dozen spears, and perhaps he passed out quickly. . . . The Philippino, petrified with funk, blindly fired both barrels of his gun into the ground and bolted like a hare. But those Belang hounds got him, too. They pulled him down and cut him to pieces.

The murderers were dealt with in salutary fashion by the military, and that was the last affair of the kind that I have heard of. I don't think the Belangs are likely to repeat it. They lack the fighting comeback spirit of the Moros. They are scared stiff of the Constabulary patrols.

Always unpleasant, reprisals are sometimes a

grim necessity. Upon this occasion, the policy of "treating 'em rough" taught the Belangs to leave Americans alone—and it has probably been the means of saving many American lives. The Belang murders happened some years ago, and the lesson of swift reprisal has had time to sink in: recently, when I was among them, it was almost amusing to see them going in for the law-and-order business. They take the rough-and-ready justice of the Constabulary patrols—who visit them twice a month—just like mother's milk.

The patrols look into any case requiring attention and deal out justice on the spot, and it seems quite satisfactory to all parties concerned. Anyway, what the patrol says, goes. This procedure seems an eminently sensible one because it obviates the delay and expense of taking cases to court at Davao. Delay is specially objectionable in exercising jurisdiction over savage tribes, because the savage doesn't understand it. Like a horse or a dog, he needs correction while the fault is fresh in his mind.

At the *hacienda* of Limedam, I spent a few very pleasant weeks with Mr. Dore, and availed myself of the opportunity of studying the habits and customs of the Belangs and Manobos in the foot-hills. One day, while we were chatting in the porch, he called my attention to a tall, well-built Belang, who was swaggering past.

"See that big fellow? We've had an eye on him for a long time. He's a crook."

I enquired what was his speciality in wickedness. And this was the story.

The man was an ex-policeman, and he had been fired out of the Force at Lais for corrupt practices. So he sought fresh fields and pastures new—in the Limedam Valley, where nobody knew him. His personality was rather striking, the result of training, discipline, and the exercise of authority as a constable. The big idea he brought with him was this: pretending to be an official tax-gatherer, he visited the Belangs and explained that, instead of collecting the taxes in bulk, he would allow them to pay him in small instalments. It appeared that he displayed his police-badge (which he had stolen) on these occasions, and that was quite enough for the poor fools who had been handing him cash and chickens and pigs—fondly imagining that they were paying-off their taxes.

He made the fatal mistake of staying too long in one place. Mr. Dore had his eye upon him, but he said nothing. He was waiting for the Constabulary patrol to turn up when he mentioned the matter to me—and they arrived the next day.

I don't know what this swindler's name was—I forget because, owing to his novel methods of getting rich quick, we called him Wallingford.

“Go, get him,” said Mr. Dore to the patrol. And a badly scared Wallingford was hauled to the porch of Mr. Dore's house. Witnesses—who had been parting from their property to the alleged tax-gatherer—were assembled. The prisoner wilted—

although I am bound to admit that his earlier efforts to play the part of an injured innocent wrongfully accused were as good as some things I have seen on the pictures.

He had the face to declare that he really was trying to help his neighbours—running a sort of Christmas-club for them, and that he intended to hand the stuff to the Deputy-Treasurer!

“Hand it over to me, now,” said Mr. Dore.

And that was where Wallingford wilted.

Doubtless he would have preferred to go to prison for a while, and enjoy his hoard of ill-gotten gains when he came out—shady financiers of the Western World have done the same thing.

The Constabulary-sergeant saw the point at once, and nodded agreement. It was a good judgment, and it would close the case.

“Return these people’s property to them,” he commanded, with a jerk of his thumb towards the delighted witnesses. “Pass it out right now. We’ll come along to your shack and see what you’ve got.”

When the Constabulary patrol had finished with Wallingford’s domicile and contents thereof, there was nothing much left, except the walls and roof and one pig.

“Sell that pig,” said the sergeant. “We’re still short of a bit of cash to pay these fellers. . . .”

And what the patrol says, goes. Sure enough, the pig went to market and the proceeds were divided between Wallingford’s remaining creditors. Then he was fired out of the Valley—minus his

police-badge, which was duly confiscated by the Sergeant. . . . I often wonder what happened to Wallingford. I rather hope he tried, some day, to swindle a Moro . . . and that would probably be the last *coup* of his shady career.

The Belangs—like the Manobo, Bagobo and Tagacola tribes—have never been famed for martial prowess. The Morcs could eat them up. Their deeds are mainly of a contemptible, ugly and treacherous kind—not only against the whites, but among themselves.

Their methods of settling tribal differences may be described as an illustration of this cowardly trait. In the early days, they built their houses on the saddles that run down from the mountains, and their primitive dwellings were often constructed in trees with split bamboo or *palma-brava* floors. When a fellow had a grouch against his neighbour, he would creep underneath his house—on a very dark night—and spear him through the cracks in the flimsy flooring. Invariably he would make his get-away without being seen.

At one time, there was a series of murders of this description, and the tree-dwellers took to building their domiciles higher up, where the length of a spear couldn't reach them. But the midnight assassins started making longer spears. I have seen these rude huts perched in a tree-top like an orang-utang's nest—in a desperate attempt to live up to the slogan of Safety-First. But one old fellow showed real genius : he built his hut on the top of

a huge tree-stump, so that the flooring was reinforced by about ten feet of solid timber! Later, however, he had to complain that they were trying to shoot him up with bows and arrows. Life is really very complicated among these pagan tribes.

As a check on their murderous propensities, they have been forbidden to carry arms.

Latterly, this official ban on lethal weapons would appear to be observed. Spears and bows and arrows are hardly seen at all, but the *badi* is often seen—a short curved knife, very similar to the Gurkha's *kukri*. They have a pretty conceit in fashioning the most elaborate sheaths for this favourite weapon of theirs, designing gorgeous ornamentation in brass and silver. Perhaps the *badi* is not really regarded as a weapon of war, like a spear or a bow, though as a throat-slitter it could hardly be improved upon.

I noticed that they carried one, down in the plantations, but up in the mountains I often saw a Belang with a brace of snicker-snees—one on either hip. They also carry a hemp-fibre sack of roomy proportions—much as a lady carries her handbag—and I have often wondered exactly what they had hidden inside? Human nature being what it is, I rather suspect that the prohibition of arms may have an effect similar to the aftermath of another kind of Prohibition.

The restriction has done something towards keeping the peace between tribe and tribe; but when family feuds blaze up, there seems to be no scarcity

of the requisite implements to bump each other off.

By some extraordinary freak of nature, the women of these tribes appear to be very sensitive and affectionate. When I was in the Lais Valley, a bereaved mother committed suicide at her daughter's grave. But the case of a little girl, only ten years of age, was truly remarkable. Grief-stricken at the death of a playmate, she hanged herself with her girdle. We found the poor child suspended from a tree. She was still alive, but too far gone for anything to be done to save her life.

The tribesmen took these tragedies in quite a philosophical way. They explained it, as a matter of course. The woman and the little maid had been called to their loved ones who were feeling lonely in the Great Beyond. Busao, the Great Spirit, had called them, and they had to go.

* * * * *

In their marriage customs these people are like the Negritos of North-east Luzon. Marriageable girls go to the highest bidder: and happy and rich is the father who hath many daughters—especially if they are good-lookers.

When a young man comes a-wooing, the father and uncles of the prospective bride's family proceed to bleed him as nearly white as he can stand. This is a man's job, and the bridegroom—being heavily outnumbered, as well as being in love—doesn't stand a chance. The women of the family, including the

mother of the girl, are not supposed to have any say in the matter at all. (But I'll bet they do, all the same.)

Nor do the blushing bride's predilections and inclinations enter into the business of getting married. When her price is fixed, she is hauled off to what may, or may not, be connubial bliss. Nobody worries about her. Her old father counts the boodle and thanks his lucky stars he had a daughter instead of a son.

Divorce, however, is a nasty blow for Pop—he has to give his presents back, and disgorge the dowry. The argument that follows a disrupted marriage is almost as acrimonious, protracted, and expensive as a *cause célèbre* in the divorce-courts of London, Paris and New York. Even in the Gulf of Davao there are moments when divorce-law reform may seem desirable and very urgent. Faced by the headman's final demand for the repayment of his daughter's dowry, you may imagine Pop stopping his longest spear and thinking of the thin flooring of his ex-son-in-law's high house in the tree-tops. And when he remembers the official ban on the carrying of lethal weapons, maybe he curses the Government—just like a Christian.

By the way, there is no cave-man stuff among the unmarried young people of the Belangs. Tribal law prohibits even a kiss, until the nuptial knot is tied. Capital punishment for flirts and philanderers has reduced bachelordom to a form of penance which no young Belang can endure. Also, it keeps

up the price of daughters—which is considered most important.

And this method of rigging the matrimonial market is not the only outward and visible sign of financial acumen in these apparently simple people. There is the *otang* habit—which is really kin to the business of money-lending: when a Belang *otangs*, it means that he has creditors. And the chief asset of the creditor is to distribute his debtors widely through the valley. Then he visits them, with a bland and urbane air, usually at meal-times. The debtor greets him with great circumspection, and volubly discusses any subject under the sun—except the little outstanding matter between them—and feeds him well, to keep him in a good humour. I have known astute creditors of the Lais Valley who go “on tour” for weeks and never have to buy a meal, exploiting the *otang* habits of his neighbours of the district.

On their journeys through the valleys and the mountains, these tribes have, of course, to rely entirely upon themselves for medical treatment. Nor will they shrink from undertaking a surgical operation, using their own knives to make incisions, and sewing up the wound with the crude implements and the material which they carry for domestic use. It is impossible to say how many die under the knife from shock, or afterwards from sceptic poisoning. But here is an amazing case of a successful operation performed in the jungle by a Belang upon his own wife. She was having a desperately bad time in

child-birth, and he decided to end her labour-pains by operating with his knife and taking the child from her.

A medico from one of the hospitals—Dr. Hanna was his name, and the case is duly authenticated—came upon them both on the Lanao trail. The operation had been performed. The woman had been sewn up. The child was alive and healthy, in the father's arms. The woman was staggering along behind him. It may well be that the kindly Dr. Hanna appeared to them in the light of an angel in the wilderness. . . . He managed to get the woman to hospital, and both mother and child lived.

Belang funeral customs are interesting.

The body is wrapped in a shroud made from calico or matting, and buried in a grave dug in the centre of the family's clearing—if death takes place during the harvest season. That is a very great misfortune for the relatives, who lose their season's crop and have to abandon the clearing and the hut they live in. The dead must be left in sole possession.

At other times, the grave is dug under a tree, and fenced.

The graves of headmen are elaborately decorated, but I have seen none so ornate as the tombs of the Dyaks of Borneo.

In Mindanao, as in Luzon, head-hunters pursued their grisly sport, but the practice seems to have died out. Though I have heard of cases in recent years, they have been very few.

Cannibalism, too, was rampant at one time, and prisoners taken in inter-tribal raids often found their uncomfortable way to the huge cooking-pots. Old sinners have told me stories of these exciting days—things which are interesting to hear, but not all of their exceedingly frank confessions would be considered suitable for publication. But it appears that the man-eaters had a special hankering for the breast and liver, which were the prime portions—usually reserved for the chiefs at the feast. Heads were smoked and hung up in the cannibals' huts. And the awful banquet was invariably followed by a dance.

I have heard on good authority that, when the first Americans came to Mindanao, there was a cannibal tribe on the west coast which affected a frightful talisman worn round the neck—a string of knuckle-bones taken from the hands of little children. It was supposed to bring good luck to the wearers.

I have heard these things spoken of over camp-fires at night, with hushed voices ; and one begins to realise how the attitudes of savage tribes has been very slowly changing, under the slow persistent pressure of educational activities in the islands. To-day in Mindanao, old hands like myself are able to detect sign of the gradual change in the outlook and customs of the people. It is pleasant and gratifying, no doubt. But when I am travelling alone among them, I remind myself that true evolution is the devil of a long business, and that

you never really know what may come to you, if you don't watch out. . . . A fellow would look very foolish and incomplete, untidily huddled up on the floor of his Moro host's shack, while his head was suspended from the roof—being smoked like a ham.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BLIND TRADER

IN my descriptions of the Belangs, I mentioned the curious fact that the women of this fierce and treacherous tribe seemed peculiarly sensitive to sorrow and capable of deep affection. Well, it so happened—coming down from the Gulf of Davao to Balut and Sarangani—that I was privileged to meet the ideal wife, in the person of a Belang woman, who was devotedly caring for her blind American husband in the declining years of his life. I was the guest of this lonely couple, whose house is built on a saddle between two hills, three hundred feet above the beach of Sarangani Island.

I was hunting for the beautifully-tinted orchid called *Phalæanopsis Schilleriana* which, according to a collector whom I had met in Manila, was to be found in the islands of Balut and Sarangani.

From the foot of the volcano on the beach, we coasted along the island of Balut for some miles, until we came to the passage between Balut and Sarangani, south of Mindanao. I went ashore three times to enquire at isolated dwellings if anybody had seen these orchids growing in the vicinity. The

natives seemed to recognise them by my description and damped my spirits by declaring stoutly that they were very rare plants. Judging by their calm pitying glances, I have no doubt they thought I was a blithering idiot—a full-grown man, with a boat's crew, chasing wild flowers from one end of the Philippine Islands to the other.

We shoved off again, and paddled across the Strait to Sarangani, where we landed on the beach. Three hundred feet above, at the top of a precipitous slope, a house stood alone. It would have been practically impossible to climb the path from the beach if the owner had not constructed a stout hand-rail of bamboo by means of which the climber hauls himself upward. The red clay soil can be as slippery as a bar of soap in wet weather; but even in the dry season there are no dull moments—between the beach and the house—for adventurous visitors. It was a long, long climb for a big man like me and I began to think, once or twice, that I should never get to the top—where the jutting verandah of the house looked so cool and inviting. But on my return journey, I nearly made the descent to the beach in one long hop: my feet flew from under me and I was hanging on the creaking bamboo-rail like a gymnast on the horizontal-bar.

Thus, I came to the lone dwelling of Mr. Coe—the Blind Trader of Sarangani, whom I had met twenty years before. Formerly, he had a camp on the beach: but his store was ruined by the tidal wave that swept the south-west coast of Mindanao

in 1919. He then built the "Crow's Nest"—as I called his new place.

Looking down on the jungle from a height like that, one begins to appreciate the density of these tropical forests: it looks as if you could walk about on the tops of trees, and not a square inch of ground is visible from above.

It is a dizzy view from Mr. Coe's verandah. On either side one seems to look down into space, so sheer is the drop. And far beyond, there is a toy jungle of closely-packed trees, a tiny yellow beach shimmering in the sun, and then the vast open spaces of the sea.

Here lives a blind American with a devoted woman of the tribes of Mindanao. To them, the outside world does not exist. Each is everything to the other. Their trading-store yields a livelihood, and the long tropical days and nights roll on happily enough. The Belang woman directs the business of the store and superintends work in their plantation from dawn to dusk. The Blind Trader sits in an arm-chair on the verandah, a .38 calibre revolver in his belt, thinking . . . thinking . . . perhaps of youthful days, when his father was American consul at Samao. But God only knows what a white exile thinks in the scented dusky evenings, while the sea is sighing on the sleepy beach and the palm-fronds rustle and nod their heavy plumes in ghostly intimacy.

"Hullo, Mr. Coe!" I said brightly, though there was a lump in my throat as I looked at the bowed

figure of the old blind man in his chair. I remembered him as a black-bearded stalwart of twenty years ago. "Don't you remember me? I——"

"Wait!" he said, quietly, raising his gnarled hand. "Just one moment, if you please! . . . I remember your voice quite well. Don't tell me your name." He smiled reminiscently. "Let me think. Ah, yes—I remember you now. How do you do, Captain Burdett? Why, it must be more than twenty years since we met. Of course. Don't you remember chartering the little trading steamer *Pioneer* to load sawn timber for the pearling lugger you were fitting out? I was supercargo, you know. We went from Cuyo to Iloilo. . . ."

It was true. We were shaking hands.

"It's damned good to see you again," I said, perhaps just a bit shakily.

"Fine! Remember how we used to sit around, thrilled to the marrow by your pearling yarns and stories of the gold-mines?"

"I do—by the Lord Harry! And I remember your stories of the old-timers in the South Seas—of Bully Hayes and Robert Louis Stevenson and Louis Becke. Great days, sir!"

"Great days," he echoed. "Oh, yes. Those were great days. We shall never see them again. . . ."

Only memories were left to the old, blind man in his dizzy eyrie on Sarangani.

He sat very still in his old arm-chair. The sightless

eyes were concealed by dark blue spectacles. The revolver in his belt was a hint to the Sangil Moros who visited the store—or maybe it was only a habit of bygone days. The best gun in the world isn't much good in the hands of a blind man. But there it was. It was all very pathetic. Whether it is due to his affliction, or to his striking personality, or to his gun, I do not know : but the Moros regard the Blind Trader with a kind of awe and they have never tried to lay a finger on him.

And his Belang wife is a ministering angel, if there ever was one on this earth. If ever a woman bore her cross bravely, she does. Pagan she may be, but I devoutly believe that her eternal reward is a sure thing. Truly, her light is hidden under a bushel : but it is the refining flame of self-sacrifice, and service, and love. In the darkness of his affliction, she has been a guiding star to her man. And isn't it written in those wise old Proverbs that a good woman's own works shall praise her in the gates ?

The Blind Trader of Sarangani is anchored in her heart, but he could return to his own people to-morrow if he wished to do so.

That night, seated on the verandah in his old arm-chair, he said to me :

“ Where else should I enjoy such peace, and rest, and love ? ”

To him, the world were well lost : and it may be that he is very wise.

Drawn to each other by memories of old times, we talked long and intimately. He told me the story of his life, while the twilight deepened and the pale stars grew bright.

He was born in Samoa, where his father—who was American consul-general—married a Samoan princess. Educated at Stamford University, California, he returned to Samoa when Germany was fomenting trouble between the rival rulers. Siding with his mother's people, he was practically outlawed. A price was put upon his head and he became an outcast.

After working for a time as a harbour-master, he came to Manila and signed on with the S.S. *Pioneer* as supercargo. A rich experience of trading among the islands followed, and the "Wonderland of Mindanao" cast its spell upon him. He decided to become a trader and established a post on the south-east end of the Gulf of Davao where he started business in *almaciga*—the copal gum industry.

From there, he removed his headquarters to Sarangani Island, where he has remained ever since—except for one visit to Manila.

Mr. Coe's eyesight had begun to trouble him, and he went to seek expert advice.

Cataract was diagnosed and the operation performed successfully.

Impatient to return to his island-home, he was allowed to go with his eyes bandaged—there were plenty of kind friends to look after him on the trip

from Manila to Sarangani, where his wife was to meet him.

On the homeward voyage, he removed the bandages prematurely and paid a terrible penalty for his haste to see. He was instantly stricken with total blindness.

Since then he has remained on Sarangani Island, tended by his devoted Belang wife. Nothing would tempt him to leave her—not even the fortune which was bequeathed to him shortly afterwards: a cocoa-nut plantation in New Guinea worth hundreds of thousands of pounds, and ten thousand pounds in cash. He gave the plantation to his sisters, one of whom visited him at Sarangani and implored him to return with her. He refused, with his arm around his wife's shoulders.

It was when he came to that part of his story that he turned his sightless eyes towards me—and the starlight seemed to glint in the lenses of his dark spectacles—and said:

“Where else should I enjoy such peace, and rest, and love?”

A wealthy man, he lives frugally and happily, declaring that civilisation has nothing to offer him in the sum of full contentment. . . . When I said good-bye to him and descended to the beach, a tranquil moon was flashing on the ripples of the sea: and, as I glanced back at the Blind Trader's house, high up on the hill, it seemed to be set among the immutable stars in the vault of heaven.

Though something had choked in my throat and my good eyes had stung when I first beheld the affliction of my old friend, I now realised that I had met a happy man.

CHAPTER XIV

HIGH SEAS AND FLYING LIZARDS

IT did not take me long to discover that Sarangani was not a happy hunting-ground for the *Phalæanopsis Schilleriana*. I had ranged around pretty thoroughly, but without much success—although a small and very irregular army of helpers enlisted themselves under my banner. It soon became known that there was a white *apo* on the island who gave away food and money to folk who helped him to find orchids. Men, women and children fell over each other to join in the hunt . . . but not really: they gorged at my expense and brought me a few bundles of plants I didn't want.

All declared that they knew the flower I graphically described to them. Oh, yes. And when I asked why the blazes they brought me something different, they vaguely replied that they understood Balut was the place to find them, not Sarangani—Balut, across the Straits, where I had come from: having been assured there that Sarangani was the place, not Balut . . . I began to pack up.

The only bit of fun I had on Sarangani Island was a night of fish-spearing by torchlight. The fishermen do not use the usual barbed spear, but a bundle

of sharpened sticks of the *palma-brava*. The idea seemed to be, not actually to impale the fish but to wedge them between the interstices of the pointed sticks—they often brought up four and five at a single lunge. Our sport, however, was suddenly cut short by a deluge of rain.

I had decided to sail across the Straits on the following morning, early. There was a light and favourable wind and I wanted to get across while the going was good. The *vinta* I had hired—it belonged to a big, lazy fellow called Pedro—was heavily loaded with sulphur from the Balut volcano, and more than a hundred pounds of stores dead weight. She had all she could safely carry even in fair weather, and I had no desire to be caught in the choppy seas and puzzling tides that often start rampaging in the channel between these two little islands.

When I called Pedro at dawn, the brute was dead to the world.

“ Pedro ! Hoy ! ”

I yelled at him, shook him, turned him over and nearly kicked him before he staggered, gaping to his feet. His son was the other member of the crew, and he was as big a fool as his father. The pair of them dawdled around until I was hopping mad. It is always the same with these blockheads. You can never get them to make a start until long, long after the time you had arranged. As soon as you are ready, they get busy with all sorts of footling little things that don't matter a hang. They remind

me of some of the world-famous go-getters and hustlers I have seen in their palatial offices—too busy hustling to get any work done. . . . Shakespeare has said, perhaps a little unnecessarily, that tide waits for no man. Our favourable wind did not, of course, wait for us.

“ Pedro, you big clumsy ass ! ” I roared at last. “ If you don’t jump to it and get in this *vinta*, my man, you can swim home, because I’m going right now ! ”

Pedro and Son embarked, with the air of martyrs going to the stake—but moving a great deal quicker. And all my hangers-on sadly gathered on the beach and waved their doleful farewells to the white *apo* who had provided them with so many free meals.

So we set out to sail across the Straits. And a stiff south-west monsoon began to blow up. The light and favourable wind I had carefully schemed to catch was no more. Our *vinta* began to lift and roll and sink in the trough of the waves, riding heavily.

“ Pedro, you dozy son of a sea-cook,” I said, pointing across the channel, “ open your weather-eye, if you’ve got one, and look at that ! ”

There was a nasty cross-sea, caused by the tide running against the wind, and I knew we were in for trouble. Our craft was low down in the water, with not more than six inches of free-board. If and when we reached that cross-sea, things were going to happen. At the moment, we were not in anything worse than rather choppy water, and Pedro

was so constituted by nature that he could never see anything farther away than the stub end of his ugly nose. He was unperturbed. And when I proposed returning and making an early start the next morning, he grinned.

"Can do," he remarked, holding to our course.

That rather got me in a sore spot. I suppose he thought I was funking it. The obvious and only sane thing to do was not to risk our little *vinta* in the rough stuff out there. But I was damned if a swab like Pedro should ever have the chance to say I showed the white feather. So I said, much against my own sea-sense and better judgment, "Carry on then." It was a fool-trick of mine, and I admit it.

But "can do"!

What a nerve!

Well, we should soon see what my valiant mariner "can do"—there wouldn't be very long to wait. From long experience in the Babuyan Channel of Northern Luzon, I knew we should soon be fighting for all we were worth to keep our little craft afloat . . . and if Pedro kept his smile on then, I'd eat my sombrero.

As the shelter of the shore receded, our speed increased in the growing force of the wind, and we headed for the cross-sea which, at closer quarters, looked very ugly. Pedro slacked off the sheet, and his smile was fading. Presently, we struck the tide-way. Waves began to lap over the gunwale and our feet were awash.

"Now, Pedro," I said, "if we don't want to sink, we must chuck some of our stuff overboard and lighten the boat. . . ." And I made a start by throwing Pedro's fish overboard—he had shipped about fifty pounds of the yellow-tailed golden snapper we had speared the night before. His groan of anguish cheered me up quite a little. "Yes, it's a sad business," I observed, heaving the last two or three into the sea. "You might have taken all that good *chow* home with you, Pedro, if you had started when I told you this morning instead of idling around and wasting time. . . ."

Pedro hadn't the heart to reply. His smile had gone, and he was looking horribly worried as we wallowed through the first run of the tides—there are four distinct tides that race through these Straits. I hurled bag after bag of sulphur overboard, but waves broke in on us every moment and the boy began to bale like mad. We were broadside-on, with our sail reduced to a rag. Our *vinta* was moving crab-fashion, but at a great pace. Sea after sea broke over us, with a vicious sound like the hiss of a big snake.

Poor old Pedro couldn't hold the steering-paddle any longer. He was a nervous wreck. I ordered him to bale and hand his paddle over to the boy. He obeyed, without a word. Both of them had set strained faces, lips tight, and eyes that showed too much white. I pulled the usual bluff, and tried to pretend to be jolly.

"Steadily does it!" I cried, for Pedro's shaky

hands were merely scrabbling at the water in the bottom of the boat. "And you, boy, keep her from broaching-to, eh? Right!"

Now he was up against it, that boy showed pluck and brains. He stuck to his paddle like a man, and kept a good course. I suppose he didn't want to die. . . . I had explained to him that if he let our bows slew round, we should be on our beam-ends and done for.

There is no doubt we fought for our lives that day.

Clear of the islands now, wind and tide headed us for South Borneo. That was a nasty shock, and I began to wonder if we had enough drinking-water on board to last out? The tortures of thirst have to be experienced to be believed, and I happened to know something about that. I devoutly thanked God when I discovered—with a rough calculation—that we had enough for about three days, going very easy with it.

And then, to my astonishment, the tide changed our course again and we headed for the Sulu Archipelago. Those were the most devilish tides I have ever had to contend with in a long experience. Four times we were swung from one course to another, until it seemed that we were never going to get anywhere, that the sea was mocking our puny efforts to keep afloat—playing with us, like a cat playing with a mouse. More than once, old Pedro gave up baling, in exhaustion or despair. I had to threaten him, put the fear of God into him. And he would go to it again, dull-eyed, licking his cracking lips.

But that boy with the steering-paddle was a wonder. Poor little devil, I wondered how he stuck it! Well, I always say you never know what you can do, until you know you'll die if you don't. . . . The fourth time we changed our course—or, rather, when that infernal tide changed it for us—it seemed far too good to be true. We were scudding straight at the west coast of Mindanao! If only it would hold! To anticipate another clammy disappointment, I told myself it certainly wouldn't. It would change again and head us off somewhere else. We should never get ashore again. Davy Jones' locker, this time. I began to sing, in case my shipmates thought I was getting down-hearted. Anyway, I expect they thought I was mad.

But the going held good, and soon we were caught in the flood-tide running straight into Sarangani Gulf. Our course had veered from south-west to north. If we could keep afloat so long, it seemed only a matter of time before we could make a landing. . . . If . . . "Pedro!" I said, clapping him on the shoulder. "Bale like two men—come on!—and we'll soon be ashore!" Plainly, he didn't believe it. Nor did he display any vital interest in the matter. The poor old codger was about all in.

Then I gave him the length of my tongue—in a manner I strictly reserve for special and urgent occasions. Pedro was so astonished, or frightened, or both, that he began to bale wildly—in much the same way as an excited sporty terrier digs for rabbits.

“ Now, Pedro old man,” I said, laughing, “ now—say *can do* ! ”

When the sun rode high at noon, the wind had dropped and we were only two miles from land. It took us two hours to row those two miles, and the scrunching of the *vinta* on the beach was a heavenly sound.

Wind and tide had punched us around a semi-circle of about seventy miles, and made us fight every inch of the way.

There was a store along the beach, kept by an old Chinaman, and he gave us a feed of bread and milk and sardines. While we drank and munched, there was much talk of seamanship, and tide-races, and gales, and doughty deeds of navigation—in which discourse old Pedro excelled himself, as the skipper of the *vinta*.

“ Can do ! ” I said gently, squashing a sardine on a hunk of bread. “ Can do, Pedro.”

The boy grinned : and I shouldn't be surprised if he had a clout across the head for that, when father got him home. Among the Philippinos, I have seen some sketchy sailormen in my time : but I really think old Pedro deserves a little niche all to himself. I had registered a vow that, rather than embark with him again in stormy weather, I would put to sea in a wash-tub commanded by a char-woman.

Nobody came out of that adventure with any shining glory. I was a fool not to have insisted upon turning back. We came back alive by the grace of

the cherub who sits up aloft. And, in the very real peril of those crowded hours in the Straits, we all had wind up badly . . . though some showed it more than another.

When we had eaten our fill, the Chinaman shook hands with himself and politely bade us good-bye. I took the opportunity of calling upon a friend of mine who ran a cocoa-nut plantation nearby. And among his handsome palms, I beheld the liveliest display of aerial gymnastics by flying lizards that I had ever seen. These remarkable little creatures were leaping from tree to tree in thousands.

I do not know how many varieties of the flying lizard there are. The Mindanao species is green, much accentuated in the head and neck. In Northern Luzon they are grey—except the membrane attached to the front leg from the body, which is bright yellow. In their astonishing leaps from tree to tree, this membrane is extended or inflated and acts like a wing.

I had seen a lone flying lizard before, but this was my first experience of a swarm of the little fellows. I watched them with the keenest interest. In numbers and liveliness, they reminded me of a locust-swarm. They must be the champion long-jumpers of the world: I have seen them do a leap of a hundred feet, from one palm to another.

We found quantities of the yellow flying lizard when I was at Camiguin Island in the Babuyan Channel raising sulphur from the volcanos, and my men used to kill them on sight: they swore

that the yellow flying lizard and the green tree-snake were poisonous and declared war upon them.

They used to hunt them in the shadow of the old Camiguin volcanic cone, and often told me of the combats they witnessed between the flying lizards and the tree-snakes. Although I, personally, never saw them fighting, there is no doubt that these two species wage war upon each other like the mongoose and the cobra in India.

The tree-snake has a tail different from any other reptile I have ever seen : it is cleft at the tip, and he spreads it like the feathers of an arrow when he makes his leap from a tree—soaring through the air like a tiny dart. He is as slim as a pencil, and almost as light as air.

I pickled a few specimens in alcohol and gave one to Padre Sanchez, curator of the Jesuit Museum at Manila. He listened with deep interest to my stories of the flying lizards and tree-snakes of Camiguin, and told me that his Society had reports from South America which were almost identical with mine. I remember how courteously he corrected me for using the word "flying."

"Soaring," he said, with a smile, explaining how the lizard's membrane and the snake's cleft tail lent them almost the same motion as an airplane with the engine shut off.

An Army doctor stationed at Aparri assured me that there was no doubt about the lizard being venomous. He had been called in to treat a boy bitten by one of these little reptiles, and although he applied

all the known remedies for snake-bite, the patient died. He was in a state of coma when the doctor saw him, and only lived about two hours.

I have never heard of any other species of the lizard whose bite is poisonous. Near the roof of the upper jaw, at the back of the first row of teeth, there are two fangs slightly larger and very sharp. I imagine that these are the cause of the mischief—but I have never heard an explanation by competent authority. Science has a lot to learn from the jungle, yet ; and there are more mysteries among God's lesser creatures than are dreamed of by learned professors.

* * * * *

My friend the planter—whose magnificent coconut palms staged a continuous performance of aerial gymnastics by the flying lizards—was not more than mildly interested in them.

“Eh? Oh, yes. Rummy little blighters,” he said. “What about a spot?”

I fell to talking about orchids, and the elusiveness of the *Phalæanopsis Schilleriana*. There were two other plants I was seeking: *Vanda Sanderiana* and *Rosea Phalæanopsis*. I mentioned Zamboanga. It was absolutely depleted. And I learned that Davao wasn't much better: one collector had gathered a score or so—as the result of three months' hard work.

I moved on, hoping for the best but feeling rather deflated. Then I had a stroke of luck, and it happened in rather a curious manner.

I called on a planter, way down the coast of Mindanao, who said he believed there were some *Roseas* in the jungle thereabouts. I decided to get after them. It was a sparsely populated region, inhabited by a handful of nondescript pagans. There were a few Moros about, but not many.

And there was famine in the land.

The planter said he had given them what he could afford, which wasn't much—a few pumpkins and beans. He had little enough for his own use.

So I was not altogether surprised when I saw the wretched beings—hollow-eyed, skinny and feeble—who came down to the beach to help disembark my stores. Some moved with a weak and tottering gait as if they might collapse at the next step. It is a terrible thing to see men starving. It seems all wrong. Nothing, I think, is more moving and desperately pitiful. I had plenty of *chow* with me and I gave the poor beggars the best feed my men could dish up. We boiled big kettles of rice, and those starving pagans went to it like famished animals. Their wan eyes bulged as they clawed at the rice with bony fingers and crammed it into their mouths.

They did a spot of work for me afterwards, and vanished in the jungle. That afternoon, I found a few *Roseas* and returned to camp feeling rather braced. And there, squatted under a big *belate* tree—which, by the way, was alive with snakes—was the most pitiful group of inert human beings I have ever seen. These poor people were evidently the wives and children of the men I had fed in the



THIS LITTLE GROUP OF ORCHIDS—"VANDA SANDERIANA"—WAS VALUED AT £1,000 STERLING

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morning. Not one of them spoke a word, or made a sound: but the dumb beseeching look in their eyes as I approached . . . I can't describe it.

I know something of what an empty belly feels like, when the larder is empty. I have been hungry in the jungle, and hunted my food as fiercely as any tiger-cat, knowing I would starve if I didn't kill something. But the misery of these women and kiddies, the deplorable condition to which they had been reduced by actual starvation, was something new to me. I don't suppose I had ever really thought of it. It's easy to say, Give us this day our daily bread . . . but not so easy to imagine what it would feel like if nothing happened.

Well, we got the old kettle going again and it was marvellous to see how my silent friends perked up when the camp fire began to crackle and smoke cheerily and the warm smell of grub set their flattened nostrils twitching. They took no notice at all of those snakes in the *belate* over their heads—not even when I shot a couple of small boas whose cold slithery writhing on an overhanging branch began to get on my nerves. These snakes, by the way, will rarely attack you. But I don't like the look of them, especially at meal-times.

While my men were feeding the little multitude, I got back to business—orchids. I was examining a picture of the *Vanda Sanderiana*, a beautiful coloured print I had brought with me, and a notion entered my head to show it to these jungle-people. They were on it in a flash and an animated conver-

sation ensued, through my interpreter. I had struck a find. They knew the plant well, recognised it from the print, and acted as guides and carriers for one of the most satisfactory expeditions I have ever made—satisfactory in more ways than one. This was not the first time, in my wanderings among the pagan tribes, that those old words had come back to me with a strange significance :

Cast your bread upon the waters . . .

When these poor people began to bring the valuable plants to my camp, I was profoundly struck by the irony of their situation—here was a community of human beings starving in the midst of orchids worth thousands of pounds sterling. And yet, so far as the islanders were concerned, a kettle of boiled rice was worth infinitely more.

One small group of those *Vanda Sanderianas*, which I photographed in flower some time afterwards, was valued at £1,000. The picture is reproduced on another page.

CHAPTER XV

THE LOST ROAD TO PARADISE

ANOTHER hunt for the *Vanda Sanderiana* orchid led me north, far away from Sarangani and Balut—ranging the mainland of the big island. This journey took me to Western Mindanao, among the Tiruray people who are the most remarkable pagan tribe I have ever met.

The exotic beauty of the *Vanda Sanderiana* is, indeed, superlative : I had been so impressed by the marvellous tints of these flowers—which I have seen growing to the diameter of five inches—that I commissioned a Japanese artist in Zamboanga to paint them for me, so that I could send the picture home to England. The native name for the orchid is simple and appropriate—*Walling-walling*, which means “ beautiful.”

The coast ranges of Southern Mindanao and the slopes of Mount Apo are the home of the *Walling-walling* ; but on consulting my friends in Zamboanga I was advised not to look for them there as Japanese collectors had cleared the district. One of my friends who knew the country intimately put me on a fresh trail.

“ That place is no good to you,” he said. “ It’s

cleaned out. You won't collect any there. And you can't buy them, for love or money! The Tiruray country is the place for you."

There was a steamer leaving for Cotabato the next day: and I started at once to plan a trip through the uplands of the Upi District. There I met the Tirurays—the most kindly, honest, and sincerely religious so-called "pagans" that I have ever met in a varied experience of the peoples of the world. Than the Tirurays of Mindanao, no more startling contrast could be imagined by a traveller who has recently left the territory of the Moros and Igorotes.

They are a hill-tribe: and when Captain Edwards, Vice-Governor, was placed in charge of them he, like myself, was deeply impressed by these people. He persuaded the education bureau to open a school in Upi, the centre of the Aung District, and it was from him that I gathered so much expert information of their lives and customs and their picturesque religious belief. Heathen they may be, according to our lights, but the world would be a better place if more Christians were like them.

On my arrival at Captain Edwards' headquarters at Upi, I was surprised to find that so much clearing had been done. Buildings had been erected, and large areas of ground were under cultivation. Captain Edwards told me that the work had been done by the Tiruray boys in training at the school which, at that time, had only been in existence for about five years.

Lounging comfortably on the cool verandah of the

Governor's house, I gleaned many strange stories of these people.

Their religious faith is deeply rooted within them. It is no thin veneer, but an active force that shapes their lives. It is real and solemn and binding. It regulates their actions towards each other in their daily life, and it struck me most profoundly that this pagan tribe of Mindanao might have taken for their watchword the commandment of the Man of Sorrows: *Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works.*

They have their legend of a Garden of Eden planted by their gods. And "a river went out of Eden" as described in the first book of Moses. The inhabitants of this Garden of the gods went fishing in the river. And they delighted so in the shoals of fish that abounded in the water, that they followed the river's course on and on, and ever onward, catching so many fish that they knew not what to do with them. Greed was their undoing. For when they turned to retrace their wandering steps, they were lost in a wilderness. The path to Eden was hidden and the world grew dark. It was the judgment of the gods and Paradise was lost. They believe that their Jehovah will come again, in the full of the moon, and guide their errant footsteps back towards the lost road to Heaven. Their redemption will come, according to the Tiruray legend, when they have won back the grace of the gods by their good works on earth.

At the full of the moon, there is a religious cere-

mony of a most moving description. They gather together and pray humbly for eternal salvation, awaiting a sign from heaven.

A flag-staff is erected in a miniature garden of rare and lovely blooms tended by the women and children. There is a shack in the garden and a table spread with simple food—for their heavenly visitor, should he deign to reveal himself to them, stepping down the silvery path of the moonrays.

The moon rises in the heavens, and a pure white flag ascends the staff. As it spreads in the cool evening breeze, the worshippers seat themselves facing the direction of the wind.

Four gongs, each sounding a different tone, are slowly and solemnly beaten. The priest raises his voice in a chant. No other sound is heard except the whispering breeze in the tree-tops and the flutter of the flag. The rapt worshippers gaze unblinkingly at the white flag high above their heads. They are looking for a message that an unseen hand will write upon it in heiroglyphics of the gods. So great is their faith, that some have declared that the writing has been revealed to them. Captain Edwards told me that these simple folk have brought him scraps of paper upon which somebody has scrawled in crude characters what he believed he had seen at the full of the moon, and pathetically asked him if he could interpret them.

The priest is a great man among them, and he is called the *bilian*.

They believe in life after death, in the day of

judgment, and eternal reward. The souls of the dead abide, temporarily, in *Bongo* : there to await the call to judgment. Here is perfect peace and rest but love and passion are absent though women's souls mingle with the spirits of men. When the day of judgment comes, all will be commanded to cross a chasm by a narrow path of bamboo bridges. The hearts of the wicked will fail them ; they will totter and fall to eternal destruction ; but the righteous will be guided by an unseen hand into the haven of supernal bliss.

The deadliest sin in the Tiruray code is the sin of cruelty : it is the worst that can be said of man or woman. It is not only a deadly sin : it is an unforgivable crime. During the whole time I was among them, I never heard a voice raised in anger or an unkind word spoken.

One day, the ground was rather badly shaken by an earthquake : and soon after the tremors began I heard a tremendous clanging of gongs. They sounded from all directions around me and, more faintly, from high up in the mountains—a brazen clangour that made my head ring.

Captain Edwards explained it, laughing at my astonishment :

“ The Tirurays believe that the earth is flat and that it is held up by a giant. Imagine Atlas with a huge tray, instead of a globe, and you get the idea. He's been holding it up for a long time, you know ! When these volcanic disturbances occur, they think he is dozing off—and they make a dash at every gong

within reach and bang it like mad to wake him up before he spills us all ! ”

The Tirurays from the mountains and the outlying villages are picturesque figures. The women deck themselves with brass abdominal rings, brass bangles and brass anklets—they are very similar to the Dyak women. The men wear few ornaments, but all carry a very wicked knife with a heavy curved blade—*panabas*—but it is chiefly used for the pacific purpose of jungle-clearing. They will cut through a three-foot bundle of grass in less than a minute with these weapons.

They brought me many kinds of orchids, but no *Walling-wallings*. I had begun to think that orchid was as elusive as the rainbow's end, when at last, after months of fruitless hunting, I came across them in the country of the wild Manobo tribe—who always bolted when they saw me ! I entered several of the clearings where they live : but immediately I walked in at one end, they dashed out by the other. You can't improve your acquaintance with such unsociable fellows, and so I don't know very much about the Manobos.

These wild men, by the way, are amazing tree-climbers—more like monkeys than humans.

* * * * *

My orchid-hunt was a success, on this trip—although there was a preliminary disaster. I lost two hundred beautiful plants—my first collection—in another seafaring thrill. Our *vinta* nearly sunk in a heavy sea. We ran for the shore and beached

her just in time, but she was full of salt water and my two hundred plants were dead and done for.

So I went back and started all over again.

Dame Fortune—the fickle jade—smiled upon me this time, and old Father Neptune let me off lightly on the return trip. I brought a magnificent lot of plants into Zamboanga and thence to Singapore. They were in splendid condition, and I shipped them to England.

On my next trip in quest of the *Walling-walling*, I shall look forward to meeting my Tiruray friends again. I often think of them . . . especially when I hear of the poor benighted heathen coming in for a wiggling from some good soul who has looked up the subject in his cosy study at home.

* * * * *

The fine physique of these honest people reminded me of the old Latin adage : *Mens sana in corpore sano*. The first thing that struck me when I met the Tirurays in the Aung District of the Cotabato Province was the exceptional height of a large number of them. The men are often taller than six feet ; their figures are slender, but of powerful build. The women are sturdier than the men, wearing their coloured striped *sarongs* with quite a splendid air.

Evidence of their work in forest-clearing is to be seen everywhere. Hills and valleys are denuded of their timber, and I have often wondered how many generations of this tribe it has taken to deforest these wonderful stretches of grass-land and

rolling hills and magnificent valleys. I have travelled through this rich upland country for hour after hour without seeing a habitation of any kind, or meeting a soul ; but, at one time, it must have been thickly populated.

It is only recently that the Tirurays are settling again on the great stretches of cleared land in the vicinity of the agricultural school, where Captain Edwards is doing such fine work among them. They are ploughing and cultivating the land, and their herds are gradually growing.

Their country is mainly situated on an elevation of at least a thousand feet above the sea, and the climate is one of the best in the Philippine Islands, with a clear bracing atmosphere. During the sunny days the heat is not oppressive and the evenings are deliciously cool. Numbers of Ilocanos are arriving and settling down happily in their homesteads. I was told that more than one hundred families, Christian and Philippino, settled this year in the vicinity of Upi alone.

The fertility of their land may be gauged by the fact—which was given to me by the Governor—that four crops have been gathered in a year from one planting. I am not sure, but I believe this constitutes a record. I should like to know if similar results have been attained in any other part of the world—remember : from one sowing and four successive reapings in the season.

It was in 1922 that a self-styled prophet arose among the Tiruray settlers whom Captain Edwards

had attracted back to the land. He was a *bilian*—a priest. Maybe he was a dreamer of dreams or a fanatic. Frankly, he was a confounded nuisance. But perhaps I had better give him the benefit of the doubt and call him a prophet.

He told the people that he had seen a vision, which disclosed to him "The Lost Road to Heaven." It was the divine secret that they prayed for at every full of the moon—as I have already described in this log of mine. He bade them leave all earthly pursuits and follow him to the mountains. Credulous, superstitious to a degree, with a passionate faith in their religion, the people were easily moved to an emotional response. One day, the prophet stalked solemnly forth from the settlements, and the Tirurays—men, women and children, burdened with their household belongings—followed him, as they devoutly believed, towards "The Lost Road to Heaven," from which their earliest ancestors had been banished by the wrath of the gods. Nothing could stop them. They were gently obdurate against all appeals to reason. Their exodus was certainly impressive, if it was nothing else. It was a holy pilgrimage—to them.

With this mass of emotional humanity to work upon, the prophetic *bilian* had a simple task. They say he went off into trances and saw visions—this pagan priest of Mindanao. A Spirit came to him in these trances and gave him directions how to reach the Promised Land : he was to lead the people to the top of the highest mountain and pray. . . .

But nothing had been said as to how the Tirurays were to live. The wholesale abandonment of the cultivated areas meant famine, and the bleak mountain-top was inhospitable: but they erected pitiful little shelters and spent hours in prayer, beating their sacred gongs.

Nothing happened.

Nothing appeared to anybody, except to the prophet, whose continued trances were the subject of many harangues or sermons.

At last, however, Captain Edwards appeared on the mountain, accompanied by a posse. With kindly firmness, he informed the prophet that he was inflicting useless privations on the people—and that it must cease, at once, before actual starvation began.

There was no trouble of any kind. The Tirurays obediently returned to their land, shepherded by the Captain. The prophet himself was meek and humble—not without a certain fine dignity.

He had to be removed from the district, where his influence was a dangerous factor among the simple Tirurays.

He went quietly—and we made him a present of a couple of shirts.

Lanquas was the prophet's name.

CHAPTER XVI

AN AMERICAN COLONY IN NORTHERN MINDANAO

I MET more white men in Northern Mindanao than in any other outlying district of the big island, and I found that a large number of them were ex-soldiers of the United States Army, who had married women of the country. Their lines seemed to be cast in fairly pleasant places. They had their little farms from which they gathered a livelihood ; and as most of them were pensioned men they were able to purchase the luxuries which appeal to simple tastes and take off the rough edges of life in the wilds.

I found them jolly good fellows, sturdy men with a fine independence. Moumangan is their headquarters, and their colony is situated on the high lands between Camp Keithley, on Lake Lanao, and Iligan, on the coast.

On the way from Iligan to Lake Lanao—where the martial Lanao Moros come from—there is a picturesque winding road which rises two thousand feet from the coast to the lake. The climate is so nearly perfect that it is a terribly hard job for even a farmer to find anything to grouse about in the weather.

As seen from the road, the colony seems to consist mainly of stores and small ranches, scattered here and there. Some are cosy enough, and pretty with their flowering shrubs and rose-bushes. Others are bare and unadorned, mere shacks—viewed from the outside. Areas of intensely cultivated land bear testimony to the work of these American pioneers, who have wrested from a primeval jungle the pleasant farms with which the landscape is studded. To realise what they have done, it is necessary to leave the main road and travel by the rough trails which have been trodden down and hacked out in years of arduous toil.

It may be truly said that this peaceful colony of farmers was born in the lap of War. A quarter of a century ago, the Moros were “up”—asking for trouble. Their raids and forays were upsetting the Americans and business people of the coastal towns. Unconquered by the Spaniards, these truculent descendants of the pirates of old were suffering rather badly from swollen heads. With complete contempt for the Philipinos, these Moro ruffians would embark on an eight-hundred-mile cruise without supplies of any kind: they simply went ashore and stole what they wanted.

There was a heavy score laid up against them when Uncle Sam reached for his gun. . . . American troops soundly drubbed them, and when it was all over the Moros had digested the hard fact that the palmy days of pirating were a thing of the past. Although, even then, not averse to shooting up a

Philippino if they could get him where they wanted him, they apparently decided that it was neither profitable nor safe to interfere with an American.

General Wood commanded the American Forces, and as Military Governor of Mindanao he speedily gained the Moros' respect and confidence. A licking from the Dough-boys, followed by a square deal with the Governor, restored order so satisfactorily that the troops were withdrawn and civil government was re-established on a firm basis. Their work done with the expeditionary force, a number of time-expired soldiers decided to remain in the island and settle down.

It is interesting to record the names of some of the original settlers, as they were given to me :

L. E. Rogers, John Cockran, A. J. Lofstrand, W. B. Bingham, C. Schinsing, Choate R. Taylor, J. R. Smith, Turner Tate, J. B. Discher, and L. Hammet.

After them, came the American colony, assisted by the Insular Government, which advanced capital up to twelve hundred pesos each. But only ten of about seventy of these early colonists stuck to their homesteads and won through by dint of sheer hard work and pluck. Some of my most pleasant recollections of Mindanao are the convivial nights I spent with these hardy open-handed men. Many of the women they had married were excellent housewives and their youngsters were a happy, healthy crowd who will, I am sure, be an asset to the Government in the years to come.

In the colony's early days, settlers needed all the pluck in the world to carry on in face of difficulties—many of which were avoidable—and privations. For instance, they incurred heavy losses on their crops owing to negligence in the sales departments. Their produce was allowed to lie and rot on the Overton jetty, exposed to scorching sun and tropical downpours, while awaiting transportation to Manila. It was this exasperating treatment that caused so many of them to pack up and return to the United States: but there were others who set their teeth and hung grimly on—and they were among the Americans I met at Moumangan, comfortably settled now on their own unencumbered farms.

Even now, however, the arrangements for marketing their super-excellent produce are far from perfect. A live agency in Iligan to handle the goods and cut out wastage in transportation costs would be a sound business proposition.

Although prices have been inflated by Chinese middle-men—who hand the colonists a raw deal every time—there is a big sale in Manila for a luscious, yellow sweet-potato called the “Louisiana Yam,” which is the pride of the farmers, and they raise white corn of the finest quality which makes the most delicious corn-bread I have ever tasted. What these colonists need is an efficient and economical marketing of their produce, cutting out graft and waste, and their position would be vastly improved, financially.

I don't want anybody to think that these stout fellows are whining and snivelling: they are not built that way, or they would have gone under, years ago. I am suggesting that their long, lean years of pioneering merit some recognition—at least, in the way of a square deal. Maybe there are American business men with interests in the Philippines who will give Moumangan a look over. There is a good deal in that plucky little colony to interest them.

"If we could market our stuff at an economic price," said a veteran of the United States Army to me, showing me over his homestead and crops, "it would make all the difference between making a bare living—which leaves our future unsecured—and working the land at a reasonable margin of profit. All we want is to leave our wives and children provided for when we pass in our checks. . . ."

Men like that deserve all the help that is possible to give them. And it is just as well to remember that they have seen service in the field under the Stars and Stripes.

While I was enjoying the open-handed hospitality of the settlers of Moumangan, I had an involuntary dip in the Agus River, which is the most turbulent torrent in all Mindanao. It carries away the overflow from Lake Lanao. Thence, to the sea, it is a seething flood of roaring rapids that culminate in the magnificent Maria Christina Falls.

The roar of the Agus River is audible for miles around.

The Moros say, "Hark! The river is hungry and it calls for the bodies of men."

Many have been drowned in the Agus. The Moros say—and I am inclined to believe them—that no man who went down in that raging flood was ever seen again. Many have been drowned, but not a single body has ever been recovered. Probably they are sucked in between the huge boulders that form the bed of the river and dismembered, but nobody knows. The River Agus never gives up its dead.

Light-heartedly, one day I set out to cross the rapids by stepping-stones. Jumping-stones would, perhaps, be a more truthful—and certainly a more graphic—description. In places, it is impossible to stride from one to another. Obviously, one has to jump. And the roaring rapids are underneath. Obviously, too, you look before you leap—to make quite sure that you are not jumping on a slippery stone.

But crossing the rapids is one of those risky day-by-day jobs in which over-confidence is the only real danger. I was over-confident. The roar of that river racing down to the sea sounds worst when you hear it first. I had begun to smile at the Moros' quaint saying, "Hark! The river is hungry and it calls for the bodies of men."

I jumped on a slippery stone, and in I went. My feet flew from under me—as if I had jumped on a bar of soap. I had fallen between two boulders which were fairly close together, just close enough

for me to get a grip of both at the full stretch of my arms—and not a very secure grip, either.

Only my head and shoulders and arms were above water.

There was not a soul in sight. I had let out a yell. The roar of the rapids drowned it. The river tore and dragged and sucked at me. I am a strong man, but my outstretched arms and tensioned fingers could not hold that strain for long. Between the two boulders, my strength was divided. If I could get both hands to one of the boulders . . . If . . . It was the biggest *if* I ever had to think about, and I had to think very quickly.

I was scared absolutely stiff. I knew my nerve was cracking—and that if I were going to do anything at all, it had to be done at once. To let go with one hand and flash it over to the other boulder, to get a double-handed grip, was the only thing to do. Maybe I could drag myself up and out of the current that seemed to hold my waist and legs like an octopus. Maybe I could. Maybe I couldn't. If I didn't try . . . well, there was nothing so sure on that bright and sunny morning as death. I'd be drowned like a kitten in a bucket.

I took the chance. There was a crevice in one of the rocks that would give a good hand-hold. I let go with one hand and grabbed wildly. It was a pure gamble, but I won. The details are hazy: I mean, what happened after I let go. Brain and muscle act instinctively in a really close call.

Sitting on the boulder afterwards, I remember feeling dull and stupid and rather sick.

Since then, I have never been able to share the enthusiasm of romantic folk for stepping-stones or water-falls.

I was living with one of the settlers in a homestead near the Maria Christina Falls, a dear old chap whom I will call Billy: his wife, Meta, was a Montesta—a woman of the mountains, not a Moro—a frail little thing, but she had the heart of a lioness. House-keeping in that part of Mindanao is no job for a jumpy woman who is scared of beetles and mice scuttling around on a dark night. In that country of piled-up basalt boulders, she is likely enough to wake up and find an eighteen-foot python in the bedroom.

Great boa-constrictors live in the surrounding forests and occasionally visit the settlers in search of a meal. They are fond of a chicken or a pig, and they know where to find them—if nothing else has turned up during the day.

Old Billy was awakened one night by a noise in his little bedroom. It was an eerie slithering noise, as of something soft being dragged across the floor. And a box beside the bed began to move about. Of course, he always slept with his gun handy—and a lamp and matches, too.

Billy lit the lamp, staring hard in the direction of that slithering noise. Meta, who had been awakened also, reached for a formidable Moro scrub-knife, hanging on the wall above the bed—

a woman of the mountains isn't easily caught napping. But, Montesta though she was, poor little Meta shrieked when she saw the flat head of a python shoot up six feet in the air from behind the box—the reptile rose on its massive slithering coils, eyeing them with a malevolent stare.

Old Billy grabbed his gun and let fly. The lamp was knocked over and extinguished. The room was full of smoke and wild movement—and there was just enough pale light from the window for them to see the enraged serpent threshing the floor in its death-throes.

Billy and Meta went back to bed and slept the sleep of the just.

A few nights after that, there was a terrific how-d'ye-do among the chickens. Grabbing a hurricane-lamp, my friends went out to investigate—Billy, for once in his life, forgetting to take his gun with him. They found a python, sitting up on its coils, slavering a bird in readiness to swallow it. Billy halted in his tracks.

"Meta," he said to his brave little Montesta wife, "I reckon it's a case of good-bye chicken—me not havin' a gun. . . . Hi! For God's sake, what you doin'?"

Meta had brought her big heavy Moro scrub-knife. And her chickens were her children. She attacked that python, like a whole battalion of Amazons rolled into one small infuriated woman. She went to it, quicker than a wild-cat and almost severed the wicked head at a single stroke.

Billy was wrong: it was a case of good-bye python.

But the mighty threshing of the reptile's coils simply obliterated Billy's chicken-house. This was a monster, twenty-seven feet from head to tail. When the skin was dried and stretched, it measured three feet in width.

To those who have never been there, any description of reptile life in these primeval jungles sounds exaggerated. There are greenish-black scorpions a foot long. Forty-foot pythons have been killed. To fully realise the ponderous weight and strength of these giant snakes, you should see a python's trail in a corn-field: it looks like the track of a hind wheel of a five-ton truck.

Farming and homestead-building in a place like that is a man's job. And the wife who stands by him, through thick and thin, is one of God's good women—no matter what her race may be.

Men like old Billy, and women like little Meta, are the salt of the earth.

CHAPTER XVII

MALITA

SEA and jungle have charms of their own, weaving spells of the *wanderlust* that none of us can resist when once we have started on the pioneering game. But it is pleasant to come in, travel-stained, to some place where civilisation has set its mark : with baths, and iced drinks, and men of your own race to crack a yarn with—some place where the work-a-day world goes smoothly on, and your gun doesn't matter.

It was in that frame of mind that I came into Malita—a beauty spot of Mindanao, on the south-west shore of the Gulf of Davao, which is a shining example of what can be done by the brains and pluck of white men. It is one of the loveliest places imaginable, and as a hive of productive industry it would be very hard to beat—here is the magnificent estate of the Caluman Company, easily one of the finest in the Philippine Islands.

And yet it is only fifteen years ago that the original owners of the estate were attacked by the Manobo tribe and murdered : it is hard to realise that tragic and dramatic episode, looking around now at the happy people working in the rich plantations.

Lounging on the spacious verandah of the Company's *hacienda*, I could almost imagine that I was looking out upon the well-kept grounds of an old English manor, or some old Colonial home, where the family has lived for generations. The drowsy hum of lawn-mowers was broken occasionally by the shrill crow of one of the roosters in an interested family of white Leghorns following the mowers, and apparently doing themselves very well. They lent a simple homely touch to the scene. And there were roses everywhere, roses of every colour, and their fragrance filled the air. These are not rose-bushes, as we know them at home, but great spreading plants like young trees, and every one of them heavy with perfect blooms.

Graceful cocoa-nut palms studded the green velvet lawns, and hibiscus in a flooding colour-scheme of reds, whites, creams, and yellows. And beyond the wide stretch of the lawns, more palms clustered in shady groves: and deep banks of Panna lilies nodded their multi-coloured blooms in a lazy onshore breeze from the sea. To the east, there is the Gulf of Davao, dotted with tiny craft. Southward, the Celebes Sea meets the misty blues and greens of the horizon.

After working-hours, this place seems to have a lulling effect on everybody. If early hours are any token of a man's virtue, then they are goodly folk at Malita. The electric light shuts down at half-past nine o'clock, and it doesn't seem too soon. There are oil-lamps, of course, but we didn't burn

much midnight oil there. I know I slept like an infant—in spite of my sins. My bed was not a hundred yards from the beach, and the sound of the waves on the shore, and the scent of the roses under the stars . . . if I were a poet instead of an old tough, I could say a lot about those things.

When dawn was breaking across the Gulf, I was on my way to the plantations—strolling through a sweet-smelling orchard of orange trees. There were pears, too, and figs and lemons. In the cocoa-nut groves, banana plants were artistically laid out, bearing fruit of exquisite flavour. It seems a great pity that transportation to Manila cannot be improved, because enormous quantities of fruit could be shipped. But there is only one old steamer that calls at Malita once a month, and she meanders all over the place in search of a cargo for the return trip—returning to Manila at her own sweet will. Perishable goods are not for her.

The present highly-efficient development of Malita's natural fertility is largely due to the initial enterprise of the late Mr. O. V. Wood—who pluckily took over and carried on when his predecessors were raided and murdered by the Manobos. There are now more than twenty thousand cocoa-nut palms on the estate, and the number is being added to yearly. The output of copra is enormous, and high-grade hemp is exported in great quantities, baled, stamped for exportation, and graded on the ground. Buyers of hemp have such confidence in the Malita

product that they will often pay a special price above the Manila rates.

For the export of Malita hemp, there is a service of direct shipment to the United States, organised by the Shipping Board, whose vessels call at Davao. Previously, consignments were shipped *via* Manila—which let in the middle-men and piled up costs of transportation. Under the present scheme, the total cost from the jetty at Malita to the United States is only two pesos and sixty cents per bale. Davao planters are profuse in their acknowledgments of the boon which the Shipping Board has conferred on their industry.

The mills and ice-plant are all run by water-power, at the lowest possible cost ; and all the machinery will soon be concentrated under one roof, in the business centre of Malita. I had an interesting chat about this scheme with Mr. C. S. Harvey, the President of the Caluman Company. Even the copra is sliced by a machine—invented, by the way, by Mr. Harvey's able second-in-command, Mr. Pinchant. I saw it working. It slices copra faster than the men can feed it.

All ploughing is done by powerful tractors, and motor-transport is largely used in the estate, though there are a number of fine bulls and carts clearing cocoa-nuts from the plantations and discharging the husks into the sea.

It occurred to me as I was strolling around that a visit to the Malita *hacienda* would make quite a lot of people rub their eyes and wonder if they were

dreaming : I mean the folk whose ideas of a planter in the tropics have been gathered from the screens of picture-theatres. Film-producers seem to have a down on the poor planter. They usually depict him as an unshaven, drunken slave-driver, kicking cowed niggers around the plantation. Nobody knows why. Perhaps it is Art ? . . . If it were true to life, heaps of planters would die suddenly in their prime—with a heavy jungle-knife stuck in their anatomy. I never heard a rough word spoken in the Malita plantations. The men worked steadily and willingly, happy in their jobs—as well they might be. The *hacienda* runs a store where they can get anything they want, except alchohol—and the annual turn-over is round about one hundred thousand pesos. The only fellows with a grouch against the Malita *hacienda*, and the real white men who manage it, are third-rate Chinese traders, who hang around with the idea of preying on the pockets of the plantation-workers. They have a thin time, on the whole, because good stuff at an honest price can be purchased at the *hacienda* store. As I watched them lurking on the outskirts, I thought of that story they tell to the marines—about the gulls that followed a ship from Aberdeen.

* * * * *

I boarded the motor-ship *Eastern*, which makes a welcome monthly visit to nearly all the *haciendas* in the Gulf, and enjoyed a leisurely trip along the coast. One of our ports of call took us to the scene of poor Gear's murder in the Belang country. And

a few miles north of the Malalag River, on the outskirts of the real Moro-land, I called on the Barrass plantation and others in the district. Here, also, were tragic memories of the things that happen in lonely places off the beaten track: only a few months before my arrival, Moros had raided a small plantation and killed the planter's wife.

Moro labour is largely employed here, and those villains always want watching. A planter told me that he would never allow a Moro to walk behind him. "Always keep 'em in front of you," he advised tersely, "and they can't stab you in the back."

Evidently, this place was not a health resort.

I spent several days on the Le Sage plantation, and noted the precautions against Moro attacks. A skilful and very martial use has been made of stout barbed wire: it protected windows, doors and outer walls. Mr. Le Sage said: "Oh, no—I have never had any trouble with them, personally. But I don't believe in taking chances."

The Constabulary are very vigilant here, and their headquarters are situated in a picturesque old Spanish fort on the bank of the river. It is built on basalt rock from which artesian springs of crystal-clear water continually gush and run to sheer waste. It seems a pity that it cannot be utilised for the benefit of the inhabitants of the surrounding district: there are times when pure drinking-water is "beyond the price of pearls."

I accompanied a Constabulary patrol to Lake Lanao headquarters of the Provincial Government.

It is right in the heart of the Moro country. It was here that General Wood—and Pershing, then a Captain—broke the *morale* of the toughest fighting men of the Philippine Islands.

Our trail ascended easily and gently by a long spur between the two great Ganassi peaks which tower above the lake—where there are more sultans and chieftains than anywhere else in the land of the Moros. Occasionally, one of the headmen would pass us on the trail—with a musical jingling of the copper or bronze bells that are suspended around their horses' necks.

As we parked ourselves beside the track, to dispose of a substantial lunch, I amused myself by watching a group of Moro small boys who were catching cicadas.

These giant insects made the most appalling noise with their wings—like a dozen old-fashioned police-rattles all going at once, a clatter that is almost a screech. It is generally believed, of course, that the cicada produces its own horrible racket entirely with its wings—but I am not so sure that a little chin-music isn't included when the big fellow gets really hotted up. Perhaps it isn't very important really. But the cicada's secret might interest manufacturers of mechanical motor-horns, syrens, and klaxons. They might obtain some valuable information, because I am bound to say that even their most recent and expensive products are not quite so excruciating as a cicada in full blast—that idea occurred to me more than once when I was in

London during the summer of 1929, trying to go to sleep at night, in my hotel.

At Gunassi—a Constabulary Outpost on the north end of Lake Lanao—we waited for the launch from Camp Keithley.

Gunassi had recently been attacked by the Moros. The Constabulary lost several men killed, and some rifles and bandoliers of ammunition were still missing.

I began to feel that I was indeed far away from the peaceful zone of beautiful Malita.

But, to be perfectly fair, the Moros are not all tarred with the same brush. Let me tell you about a friend of mine, called Panglima Ballu.

She is a Moro of renown.

One may think of her as a Boadicea of Moroland. She has led her tribe in war, with spear and shield. But I think I had better let the story of Ballu be told in the words of the Provincial-Governors and Constabulary-Commanders, whose letters she has shown to me. Among these officials and officers are the Provincial-Governor of Sulu, the Governor of Zamboanga, and outpost and district commanders of the Philippine Constabulary.

I will quote a letter written by Lieutenant J. B. Cadu :

BONJAO, SULU.

OCTOBER 20TH, 1906.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN :

Panglima Ballu served in the Tribal War between her husband's people and another tribe when her husband was killed. Upon her men retreating

from the scene of action this woman took her husband's spear and shield and led his men on to the victory they had so nearly lost.

Since that time, this woman has been the head of her husband's people and has always been a powerful factor in the affairs of the islands where she lived. During Tribal Wars, she has herself led the fighting-men, showing a spirit more of the Amazon than the Moro.

Panglima Ballu has ever been faithful to the Government in so far as the undersigned has knowledge of her acts and intentions. She is probably the strongest character among the women of Tawi Tawi and is possessed of powers of a diplomatic nature that would be the pride of many women of Christian race.

There are in Tawi Tawi many headmen of high rank who would gladly enlist this woman to their side in the many feuds and questions which continually arise amongst the Sulu people, and in perusing the names of the Moros of import in this district, that of Panglima Ballu heads the list.

*(Signed) J. B. CADU, Lieutenant,
Philippine Constabulary.*

Here is a brilliant side-light on the nature of this Moro woman :

Panglima Ballu showed me, one day, a Liberty button of the Third Liberty Loan: with other prominent Moros she raised a sum of several hundreds of pesos and subscribed it.

When I asked her if she had received her interest on the Loan, she smiled.

"Why should I?" she replied. "I gave it to the Government when they needed money. It was our gift."

Every Commanding Officer and Provincial Governor of the last twenty years has voluntarily written complimentary letters on her courage, loyalty, and just dealings. And as for me, with Panglima Ballu I always felt that I was in the presence of a great lady.

In her, you meet another of those pagan friends of mine who are fit for any company—either in this world, or the next.

A strange daughter of the Moro pirates of the Sulu Sea!

Panglima Diki-Diki was probably the quaintest sultan who ever reigned in the Sulu Archipelago. He was a ruler of Jolo, but is now dead.

Than Diki-Diki, anything less like the imposing and traditional type of Eastern potentate could not be imagined: he was a dwarf, only thirty-three inches in height from the crown of his tasselled fez to the toes of his tiny canvas shoes. When strutting among his stalwart subjects of the Samal Moros, the top of the sultan's absurd little head would hardly reach their waist-line!

Exactly how and why this freakish mannikin became ruler of Jolo is a story that nobody seemed to know—or, if they did know, they held their tongues. It remains a mystery to me.



DIKI-DIKI

The small Sultan of a small island in the Sulu Sea. Aged 50 years. Height 33 inches.
This odd little chap is now dead

PUBLIC LIBRARY,
SOUTHFIELDS.

To-day, the Sultan of Sulu soberly accepts the tribute paid to him from the coffers of the British North Borneo administration, and he is still the titular and supreme ruler of this once turbulent nest of pirates. But a former sultan had his beard singed by the British Navy in a very smart action that blew one of his piratical strongholds off the map. His corsairs had been harrying British East Indian merchantmen on the high seas—but they never did it again.

The Moros were not alone in that business, for the Bajaos lent them a hand—they were hand-in-glove with their piratical neighbours. The Bajao of to-day, however, displays none of the bloodthirsty attributes of his ancestors. Living peacefully on the little island of Setanki, in unbroken amity with the Chinese traders who have made this atoll their headquarters for hundreds of years, the Bajao tribe of sea-gypsies quietly pursue their calling as fishermen among the reefs.

Only when afloat in his *vinta*, is the Bajao in his natural element. His life is spent on the sea, and he is a born fisherman. I have never yet had the luck to be among them during the shark-fishing season, but that is a new sensation that I promise myself. I am told that a sea fight between a giant shark and the Bajao fishermen in their *vintas* is a sight that gets the spectator mad with excitement.

Incredible as it may seem, the Bajaos suffer from *land-sickness* if they have an unusually long spell ashore. Innured as they are to the constant motion

of their small craft at sea, a lengthy sojourn on *terra firma* makes them ill.

This does not sound at all funny to men who have been on Setanki Island among the seafaring Bajao tribe: but it got the biggest laugh of the evening in the lounge of a London hotel, during my last spell of leave at home. Naturally, as the symptoms of this unique malady are the same as those of *mal-de-mer*, it doesn't make the Bजाos laugh.

Under the *régime* of the present Sultan of Sulu, the old order of wholesale buccaneering times has changed indeed. For instance, I know from personal experience that transactions for the sale of land have to be officially approved by the Sultan's Hadji and by the Sultan himself, before a deal can be clinched. And one's mind harks back to the days when conveyance of property was simply effected under the *Jolly Roger*, at the edge of the sword!

There are enough Moro bad men, however, to keep the Philippine Constabulary busy. I often swapped yarns with the officers and non-commissioned officers of the Patrols—real mystery stories of murder and loot that made me wish I were a novelist, with a stenographer handy. The Constabulary sleuths had thrilling stories to tell of their Philippine man-hunts—but none more strange and thrilling, as they agreed, than my own experience as a sleuth among the bad men of the Gold-Rush years in Australia when, by the merest fluke, I brought a murderer to the gallows.

Perhaps I may as well tell the story here, as I told it to my Philippino friends. You may imagine us swapping yarns, sitting by the Lake Lanao trail in the shadow of the gaunt Ganassi heights of Moroland . . . and not forgetting to keep our weather-eye open all the time, because we were not so far away from the outpost which had been so recently attacked. Maybe there were Moros, perched up there among the peaks, who had their weather-eye on us—high up in some rocky eyrie, like the murky birds of prey they are.

* * * * *

My story took me back to the romantic years when I was in the early twenties—a hefty youngster, hard as iron, full of beans, no end bucked with myself with a growing pile of one-pound bags of alluvial gold ; but still a little fresh to the rough-stuff of backwoodsmen. Even so, however, I was considered something of an old hand among the gold prospectors, for I had jumped in early. Down the gold-trail, you find all the ugliest passions of a certain kind of man. You had to watch out in those days. There were bad men around who thought nothing of murder, if they could grab a fellow's pile.

CHAPTER XVIII

A GALLOWS-BIRD IN THE BUSH

IN the sparsely-settled district of Roeburn—a short distance inland from the port of Cossack, north-west Australia—we had the news of a couple of murders of a rather peculiar kind.

The first victim was a woman. She had been stabbed to death, and the nature of her wounds suggested that the murderer had used a peculiar weapon—not the bowie-knife or dagger. Her wounds were of a triangular shape, and they puzzled the local police and the doctors who examined the body : they were not unlike the terrible and almost unhealable wounds that used to be inflicted by the old Brown Bess bayonet of bygone days.

Not long afterwards, the local bank manager was found murdered. He was lying dead in his cot, on the verandah of his house. It was the hot season, when it was his usual custom to sleep in the open air. Some robber knew that, and got the bank manager where he wanted him, in the black-dark night when nobody was around. The chief clerk of the bank found him, early in the morning : he was stiff and cold, with a terrible triangular wound in the temple.

The murderer had ransacked the house, turned everything upside down—obviously searching for the keys of the bank which, curiously enough, were found by the clerk safely hidden in the blood-soaked pillow-slip on the bed. Perhaps the murderer had been scared off, disturbed during his search and had to quit. But there wasn't a trace of him. Not a single clue.

Evidently, however, both of these crimes were committed by the same weapon. There were fellows who called that a clue and got busy on it, but it led nowhere. Crime-detection in the bush and the jungle is very much like looking for a needle in a haystack, and clues that might be helpful in a big city are of no use at all.

Then a man came forward with evidence of a circumstantial kind—his name, I remember, was Frank Wein. He identified a Chinese gardener who, he said, he saw coming out of the bank manager's bungalow at about eleven o'clock on the night of the murder. Wein testified that he was passing by, on his way back to his camp, when he saw the Chink—but, of course, he knew nothing about the murder at the time and saw nothing strange about a Chinese servant being around the place. But when news of the bank manager's murder reached his camp, he came in to give evidence of what he had seen.

The Chinaman swore that he knew nothing about it, and denied that he had been in the bungalow at all on the night of the murder. He said he hadn't left his little shack in the garden, where he had his

sleeping-quarters ; and that the first thing he heard about the murder was when the bank clerk raised the alarm in the early morning on the next day. Under searching interrogation by the police, he stuck to his story desperately, pleading an *alibi*. But his *alibi* couldn't be proved, because he had spent the evening alone and so there was no evidence to back him up. And, upon the other hand, there was no second evidence to back up Wein's story. But things certainly looked black against that Chink.

He was indicted on the capital charge and found guilty ; but in view of the circumstantial nature of the evidence, he received a life sentence of imprisonment, instead of being hanged.

These murders were soon forgotten in a fresh wave of excitement.

The great Kimberley gold-rush began.

Gold had been found by prospectors, after enduring great privations—some of them had ridden fifteen hundred miles on horseback, travelling overland from Queensland. At that time, there were few settlements or cattle-stations—and these were very widely scattered with great distances in between. The fresh gold-fields were at the head of the Ord River, four hundred miles from Derby which was the nearest town where supplies could be obtained.

I was one of the original Kimberley prospectors, and I well remember that trek for provisions. We took it turn-and-turn about. Half of our number took all the riding and pack-horses down to Derby,

while the others worked the claims for their mining partners. Men were pouring in from all directions answering to the call of gold, and those were hectic days when Fortune seemed always to be awaiting us—just around the next corner! They were days of high hopes and crushing disappointments. Men slaved until they were forced to stop by sheer exhaustion—seeking to outdo each other in the race for the precious yellow stuff. They struck up queer friendships ennobled by real comradeship. There were jealousies, quarrels, orgies, gang-fights and God-knows-what.

I was working on a very rich alluvial claim known as the “ Junction-claim ” on McPhee’s Creek. All the old-timers who discovered claims in the early days—I was one of the first flight at Kimberley—were secured in exceptionally large claims of not less than a thousand feet in length. When the big rush came, claims were limited to fifty feet for the new arrivals, but we retained our original holdings. Among the diggers round about my claim were a couple of old chums—Bony Bream and his partner Monty Brown. And there was a big red-bearded Scandinavian called Jan Johnson whose partner was Frank Wein—the chief witness in the recent murder case at Roeburn. Johnson and Wein had already struck it lucky and there were tall stories of the pile that was growing up between them.

Luck had come my way, too. I had been digging eight to ten ounces a day, but only after months of incessant toil from dawn to dusk, and my *cache*

of gold was increasing. I buried the stuff at night, digging a hole in the ground covered by my eight-by-ten tent : that was the only kind of safe-deposit we had in those days.

One Saturday afternoon, I played truant from the scenes of my labours. Feeling in need of a change, and tired of solitude, I decided to pay a visit to my chums, Brown and Bream, who were working not so very far away. Their claim was in Hall's Gully—named after the prospector who had discovered it some months previously, and sold out.

I rode out, as happy and light-hearted a young chap of twenty or so as you would find anywhere on earth.

I hadn't a care in the world. With a rich claim, and health and strength to work it, I felt as happy as a man can be. As I headed my nag for Hall's Gully, I sang at the top of my voice—in sheer exuberance of high spirits.

Trotting, cantering and walking, I followed the winding trail which led up one gully and down another, until I reached the head of Spring Creek which ran into the Sandy Elvira. Hall's Gully was still a good way farther up the river, and within about a mile of it I came upon a solitary camp. It was perched on a rise, just above the gurgling springs in the rocks which gave Spring Creek its name.

Jan Johnson was busily at work, digging an ordinary miner's prospecting pit—about five by

three. His partner wasn't anywhere about and I halted my horse to have a word with Jan. The big fellow was sweating in every pore, and he looked kind of lonely.

"Hullo, Jan!" I cried, grinning. "What are you digging for? You don't think you're going to find anything there, do you?"

Jan winked, and wiped his red beard with the back of his hand.

"Ah!" he replied ponderously, "you never can tell, my lad. You don't know what we may find down here."

"You won't find the colour of it," I laughed. "Why, Spring Creek's a dud, and everybody who knows anything knows that!"

"Some fellers," said Jan, jokingly, "think they know a whole hell of a lot . . . specially young fellers, hey?"

I wished him good luck and continued on my cheerful way. After a scramble through the sandy bed of the Elvira and a climb up the opposite bank, I found my old chums of Hall's Gully.

They yelled a cheery greeting, and we sat down to a sociable chat before supper.

I said: "Jan Johnson's sinking a prospecting shaft in Spring Creek. Saw him just now, working like a nigger."

Bony Bream said: "Those two! Why, Jan Johnson and Frank Wein make us smile. They've been foolin' around there for a week, and everybody knows it's no good."

"I told him," I remarked, "and he just laughed, wagging that red beard of his."

"He might have something to laugh at, if he worked this side," Monty Brown observed sagely, diving his big fist into a bag. "Boy, look at this here!"

It was a specimen of gold and quartz, and it weighed eighty-seven ounces—they had found it during the morning's work.

Having handled it, admired it, and duly returned it to the smiling partners, I produced a specimen of another kind which I had brought with me—a bottle of whisky. We cleaned it out, between us, and turned in rather late.

After breakfast, I took a stroll up Spring Creek and found Jan still hard at work. He said he wanted to strike bottom that afternoon, and then if they found nothing, he and Wein were shifting camp. I advised him to try somewhere near where my pals were working, but Jan shook his head.

"My mate Frank has fallen out with 'em," he said.

I knew Wein as a nasty-tempered brute, and it wasn't long before I met him. He was bringing in their horses, and—as cool as you please—he was driving my horse along with his.

"That's my horse—when you've done with him," I said.

"That so?" And he just looked at me, as if I were nothing.

"Yes," I said, taking my animal.

"Well, take it and clear out. I've got no time to talk to boys this morning."

I answered back, hot-headed as you like. "I don't want to *talk* to you, Frank Wein—but if you'll come off your horse for five minutes, I'll push your ugly face back!"

But there was nothing doing. Wein rode on, with a sort of contemptuous smile—but I thought he was looking a bit white around the gills. When I told Brown and Bony Bream about our little altercation, they were all for going up to Spring Creek and making Wein fight it out. But I refused. Johnson, at any rate, was a decent chap, and I wasn't going to raise trouble in his camp.

"Jan's about nine feet deep, in that pit," I said, more to change the subject than for any other reason. And old Bony looked at me cunningly.

"Is he? . . . H'm . . . I got an idea. I reckon that ain't anything to do with prospecting. They're digging a *cache*!"

"A *cache*? What for?"

"Well, they're moving on a bit, you say. Bet they've got all sorts of stuff and they're burying it until they come back—tinned stuff—and we're getting a bit short, Monty!"

The two hard-bitten old-timers looked at me, and at each other.

"Anything buried in a mining field," said Monty, rubbing his nose, "belongs to the man who finds it——"

"I'm not standing for that!" I said.

"You're only a kid," was Bream's paternal comment, and he said it quite kindly as if he were sorry for me. "Say, Monty, let's take a run up the Creek in the morning, and if those fellers have gone, we'll open their *cache* and see if there's anything we want. . . ." All my remonstrances were grandly swept aside. I was a greenhorn. I didn't know anything. The law of the prospectors was quite plain on the matter. Were we prospectors, or were we not? Very well, then. Bony clumped me on the back before we turned in that night—there had been a further argument as to the ethics of the case, as to *meum* and *tuum* and all that.

"Wait until you're a bit older, Fred," he said soothingly. "And you'll know better!"

And I really believe he meant it.

Spring Creek was deserted when we arrived in the early morning.

"They've beat it!" chuckled Bony.

"Very kind of 'em, I'm sure," Monty observed, winking at me. "Now, where's that *cache*, Fred?"

"It used to be there." I pointed to the place where I had seen Jan digging. But there was no sign of turned-up earth, not a sign of a hole. I legged my horse up a bit nearer, leaning down in the saddle to look more closely at the ground. I noticed that the porcupine-grass had been newly burnt off. My horse's near fore hoof suddenly sank deep in fresh ashes and soft earth. The *cache* had

been cunningly hidden, and my nag had put his foot in it—otherwise we might have looked until our eyes dropped out.

“Bet you Wein did that part of the job,” said old Bony, beginning to dig. “Not the first time he’s made a *cache*, the dirty dog—burying a bit of loot he’s swiped off fellers in the gold-fields, I shouldn’t wonder. . . .” Bony’s virtuous indignation on the subject amused me.

I left them to it, declining their invitation to remain and take a share of the swag. I remember the eager shining faces of those two rather delightful old blackguards as they bent over their shovels and went to it with a will.

Later, when I called at McPhee’s Creek, I heard what they had found.

When they had dug down about six feet or so, Monty Brown’s shovel struck something soft and bulky. It was the corpse of Jan Johnson, wrapped in a ‘possum-skin rug.

Old Monty scrambled out of that hole a great deal faster than he had gone in. . . . I could picture the gruesome scene well enough, when they told me about it, although they didn’t go into too much detail. They were a case-hardened pair of diggers, and not the sort to turn squeamish at the sight of a dead body—not under ordinary circumstances. But to find a corpse when you are confidently looking for toothsome dainties . . . well, I reckon that would upset most people.

What had happened at Spring Creek?

It was clear enough. Frank Wein had robbed and murdered his partner.

The mounted police were soon on the trail—a Sergeant named Troy who afterwards became Commissioner of Mounted Police, a trooper and a couple of black trackers.

Troy sent for the Warden of the Gold-fields, a doctor, and a bunch of diggers to act as coroner's jury. The black trackers were sent out to find Frank Wein's trail, and they led Sergeant Troy to him after a chase lasting about two days. Wein had no idea that he was being trailed. He was watering his horse at the Fitzroy River, quite happy, when he heard Sergeant Troy's voice just behind him :

“ Wein, you're wanted ! ”

He spun round, and looked down the barrel of the Sergeant's Colt revolver. A big black fellow stood on either side of him. Frank knew that the game was up, but he blustered.

“ What's the big idea ? ” he demanded. “ What d'you want me for ? ”

“ You'll see, when we get to Derby,” Troy replied, and handcuffed him. Wein knew then that his next important engagement would be with the public executioner—but he very nearly beat the hangman that same night. He managed to open a vein in his arm with a piece of wire, but Troy put a tourniquet on him and roughly staunched the bleeding.

When his kit was searched, the police found a

queer patent knife-sharpener, a gadget with a triangular blade not unlike a dagger—and Frank Wein confessed, on his way to the scaffold, to the two murders in Roeburn.

He was duly hanged in Perth.

If I hadn't taken that casual trip to Hall's Gully, and seen poor Jan Johnson working in his prospecting pit, Frank Wein would have got away with it.

And maybe it would not have been found out even then, if Monty Brown and Bony Bream hadn't started digging up that *cache* for goodies. After it was all over, I said to Bony:

"Well, anything that's buried in the ground belongs to the man who finds it. Isn't that so, Bony?"

"Aw, you go to hell!" said Bony.

CHAPTER XIX

EXPLORING VOLCANOES IN NORTHERN LUZON

FROM orchid-hunting in Mindanao, returning north to the country of the Ilocanos and Negritos, my explorations led me into something very different, but certainly not less exciting. I was thrilled, I remember, by my first descent as a deep-sea diver searching for pearls. But I don't think I shall ever forget this trip—my first descent into the steaming, stinking, sulphurous bowels of a volcano.

Since then, I have gone down into many craters in the Philippine Islands—including the Dying Volcano of Balut—but my thoughts return always to that first descent. It was on Camiguin Island. I had no expert guides. I had to *feel* my own way, timorously, with the hot ground quaking beneath my uncertain feet, my ears assailed by the vicious hiss of steam escaping from hundreds of vents. I will confess that fears enveloped me as thickly as the choking sulphurous fumes and scalding steam. . . . After all, none but the bravest liar boasts that he has never been scared.

To undertake this novel work of exploration, I

had to recruit picked men from my Ilocano miners because I was fully aware of its extremely hazardous nature. And quite apart from the perils of volcanic craters, our sea-trip from the mainland to Camiguin meant that we must navigate the dangerous channels of Babuyan, which can give the skipper of a big steamer very anxious moments on the bridge.

Here, the navigator must beware of the terrific tides and "tide-rips" that race through these channels from the Pacific Ocean to the China Sea—or *vice versa*.

I chartered the best craft I could find, an Ilocano *viray*, with a native crew, and we sailed from Dirique Cove along the North Coast of Luzon and anchored for the night off Fuga Island. The next morning we made for Camiguin—and our course lay straight through those wicked channels. I kept a vigilant eye on my Ilocano sailor-men as our fragile *viray* approached that roaring surging waste of waters. Then followed two days and two nights of buffeting that taxed our pluck and physical strength to the uttermost limit. Every man of us quivered with fear and excitement. And our *viray* seemed to shiver, too, as the racing "tide-rips" sucked at it.

Off the southern point of Camiguin Island, we escaped disaster with only a yard or two to spare—a miracle of luck or steersmanship, or both. One of those almighty "tide-rips" seemed deliberately to single us out for destruction. It rushed at us with a roar like the thunders of the narrows below

the Falls of Niagara. Every one of us held our breath. . . . We only *just* managed to "make" a point of the Island and scramble clear as the torrent came rushing past—a mountain-range of waves from six to ten feet high followed by huge dizzy whirlpools that seemed to gape for us. I was awed by the appalling sound of the rushing waters—a sustained deep-throated roar that remained hauntingly in my ears long after the waves had spent their violence. The menacing voice of the "tide-rip" can hardly be imagined: it can be heard miles away. My Ilocanos were so unnerved that I decided to camp for the remainder of the day on the point which had proved our salvation in our moment of supreme peril.

The beach was formed of great volcanic boulders and I discovered a phenomenon of unusual interest. Between two streams of highly mineralised water, boiling hot, there flowed a beautiful rivulet of crystal clearness, cool and refreshing.

Pottering around, basking in the sun, and fishing, my Ilocanos soon regained their lost *morale*. The Ilocano's philosophy is largely based on appetite and the means to assuage it—and my fellows were thrown into the seventh heaven of delight when they discovered that edible crayfish were plentiful. They gorged themselves to repletion while the skipper of the *viray* and I amused ourselves with rod and line—catching red and golden "snapper" as fast as we could bait our lines and haul them in. The southern end of Camiguin Island is a fisherman's Paradise.

It was during a lull in the proceedings that my attention was attracted by a mysterious sound that seemed to emanate from the other end of the bay. It was a very mysterious sound indeed. It was something like the booming of a far-distant siren, alternating occasionally with a deeper thudding note not unlike the report of a heavy gun heard at a distance. I decided to investigate and soon discovered that it proceeded from the mouth of a cave on the shore into which the waves of a heavy swell were flowing and ebbing.

I called a couple of Ilocanos and we entered, clambering along the rocky ledges. As we scrambled farther in, keeping our footing with difficulty on the slippery rock-ledge, I observed that the roof began to slope upwards and that the sides of the cave came down sheer to the water's edge. There was only one way to continue our exploration—and that was to dive in and swim for it, right into the gloomy depths of the cave which was echoing louder and louder with that mysterious booming noise. As I kicked off my shoes, the Ilocanos looked doubtful. For once in their lives, they were not really keen on a swim. Like all primitive natives they are a superstitious lot, and they began to mutter about evil spirits.

However, I managed to persuade them to follow me. And in we dived, swimming strongly and keeping our eyes and ears well open. The water was warm, more than tepid, in fact. And the farther we swam, the warmer it became until it was

so hot that my rather jumpy bodyguard made no secret of the fact that they considered it was high time to return before the whole lot of us were parboiled.

"Come on!" I yelled, and my voice boomed and echoed oddly against the sloping roof of rock.

But those followers of mine had clearly decided that this adventure had gone far enough—for them, at any rate. Without bothering to reply, they had turned about and I could hear the splash of their flailing arms as they swam for dear life back to the entrance of the cave, putting as much distance as possible between themselves and the sinister abode of that muffled booming voice from the depths of the cave.

To be quite candid, I was not in love with the idea of going on alone; so I turned and ploughed after them, overhauling them easily. At that moment a big wave came rolling into the cave and up we all went on the crest of it, lifted by its swell like so many corks. Luckily for us, the roof of the cave was very high at this point; but still, as that wave took me soaring upward on its crest—with a violent surging motion—I acutely wondered whether my skull was about to be cracked like an eggshell, or not. . . . That high rocky roof looked most appallingly low to me, and I distinctly remember feeling a prickling sensation in my scalp as if my nerves were rehearsing the big bang. Then the wave subsided—and I felt limp and deflated. It was a near thing.

But the rush of water bore us backwards and spun us round. Striking out strongly, spouting

salt water from our mouths and shaking it from our eyes, we suddenly found ourselves facing the back of the cave—and the secret of the great boom was mine. As the wave receded and the level of the sea sank, it uncovered a great steam-vent in the wall of volcanic rock and a tremendous jet of steam came roaring out and hit the roof with a concussive noise that almost stunned us.

That was the final touch to the frayed nerves of those two Ilocano fools. They swore that they had seen the Evil Spirit and felt its scalding breath upon them: that its awful voice had roared in their ears. . . . With a dismal yell, they plunged around and swam for the cave-entrance like a couple of sharks in sight of prey. I am a strong swimmer, but they simply left me standing: they streaked away from me as if I had been treading water.

I swam after them in meditative mood, trying to picture in my mind what would have happened if that steam-jet had caught us fair and square. There isn't a shadow of doubt that we should all have been instantly scalded to death. As I began to realise what I had missed, I felt rather shaken up. None of us is normal in that rather sickening reaction that follows inevitably in the wake of a really narrow squeak; and I remember thinking that there would be something abominably unheroic in a death like that. If I had to die adventurously, I thought, I should really prefer something picturesque. To be boiled, just as if I were an egg, seemed merely absurd.

When I reached the mouth of that infernal cave

and waded out of the water, my precious pair of Ilocanos were not to be seen. I guessed they had made a bee-line for the camp and gathered an audience for their cock-and-bull yarn of the Evil Spirit. Anyway, I wasn't worrying. This afternoon on Camiguin Island was only an interlude, a sort of half-holiday before I tackled the volcanoes. I had a sun-bath, and strolled along the beach in the direction of our camp, idly kicking up the sand with my thin canvas shoes : I distinctly remember that I was not wearing my thick boots, because of what happened when I peeped into a little cave of the sheerest beauty.

With its stalactites and stalagmites of turquoise-blue and yellow and palest green, all scintillating in the fiery rays of the afternoon sun, it made a picture that reminded me of those old-fashioned transformation-scenes of Drury Lane pantomime which I had marvelled at in the far-off days of my youth. Forgetful of past experience, and a recent resolution never again to explore a volcanic cave for fun, I stepped within, entranced by the almost unearthly iridescence of what really looked, even to a hard-bitten globe-trotter like me, more like the miniature palace of a fairy-queen. It was quite small, not more than about ten feet by twelve. Viewed from the darkened interior, with the slanted sunbeams touching its slender stalactites with rainbow hues, its beauty was marvellously enhanced.

Spellbound, I took another pace forward, craning my neck in wonder . . . and a thin jet of scalding

hot water from the roof descended upon the back of my neck and ran down inside my khaki shirt. Romance fled in the twinkling of an eye, and in about the same space of time I had leaped out of the way . . . and stumbled knee-deep into a pool of piping-hot water. I only had thin canvas-shoes on my feet, and I leaped out again cursing.

A few moments after that, I was paddling in the cool sea, feeling—and probably looking—frightfully peeved. My two missing Ilocanos came strolling past, rather guiltily ; and after one look at my overcast countenance enquired if anything was the matter ?

“ No,” I said, gently. “ By the way, I think I dropped my tin of cigarettes in a pool of water in that little cave over there. Just run along and fish ‘em out.”

Well, an unsuspecting Ilocano waded blithely into my pool—but he came out of it like a flying-fish. When I asked him if anything was the matter, he gave me a long and mournful look.

“ *You* know, señor ! ” he said. “ *You* know ! ”

He shook his head, looked down at his naked feet, and looked at me with the beginning of a grin that grew broader and broader, until we both burst into a roar of laughter. The Ilocano has his faults but he is a cheerful bird.

The little joke passed round the camp and became a catchword. I often heard an argument clinched with the remark :

“ Oh, you—you go and fetch a tin of cigarettes ! ”

* * * * *

When we turned out soon after dawn, the sea had changed its angry mood and seemed to smile on my project to sail to Pio Pinto—the only safe port on Camiguin Island—for there was a strong tide in our favour and a following wind that simply bowled us along our northerly course. Easily rounding the point, we took to our oars and rowed placidly into the bay. With our *viray* comfortably moored, we pitched our camp in no time. My fellows—under the big foreman, Bartolomeo—worked like Trojans, and we soon had quite a cosy little home-from-home for headquarters, while we settled down seriously to the risky job of exploring Camiguin's volcanic craters for high-grade sulphur.

I had obtained the services of a Philippino guide. A stocky determined fellow with a jutting jaw and flashing white teeth, he soon showed us that he was a climber of real championship class. After seeing him slickly scooting up an unclimbable tree, I am almost prepared to take my oath that the fellow had prehensile toes. And it was only by climbing the tangled vines drooping from trees on the edge of the plateau, that we could make the last thirty feet of our breathless ascent from the beach.

We were not all so smart at this climbing business as our Philippino guide. While he went blithely up those vines like a monkey—or like a fly up the wall—we followed in different fashions. My own ascent was not, perhaps, remarkable for speed or grace ; while even the big Bartolomeo and his gang grunted and gasped.

Everybody flopped down for a breather, except our guide who was as fresh as paint. He beguiled our rest-time by calmly scooting up a tree which was a good hundred feet in height. He simply walked up the naked trunk—by a method which was effective and spectacular. Passing a rope round it and knotting the ends together, he insinuated himself within the loose loop and pushed it up as high as he could reach : then bracing his muscular back against the rope and digging his toes into the bark, he literally walked up, shifting the loop higher at every few steps.

He was up in the topmost branches in next to no time, and proceeded to spring a delightful surprise on we weary, thirsty fellows gasping on the ground after our arduous climb. A shower of fruit descended among us. He was lopping laden branches of delicious fruit and tossing them down. I don't know what it is called, but it tastes rather like Chinese *lychee*.

Considerably revived, my little convoy pushed on towards the craters, and soon came to one of the poisonous springs which are peculiar to volcanic regions. It was trickling from a rock and formed a pool on the ground : lying around were the bodies of dead birds, and iguanas and smaller lizards, and a couple of big pythons, victims of what seems like one of Nature's grim jests. I judged this poison to be arsenic, after examining the surrounding outcrop of rock which was thickly impregnated with it ; the sulphuric acid in the calcined volcanic rock must have dissolved it and mixed a deadly potion

for the parched creatures that had come down to the pool to drink.

I have often wondered how any creatures can exist in this country where the only available water-supply is found in mineral springs so tainted with sulphuric acid as to be nauseating, if not poisonous. I passed an idle remark, something to that effect, to Bartolomeo, and he asked me to lend him my tin pannikin which I always carry on my belt.

“What?” I said, with a glance at the deadly spring. “You’re not going to drink that stuff, you crazy fool!”

“No, señor,” he replied smiling. “Behold the savage!”

He placed my pannikin on the ground, and our guide cut a few lengths of two-inch rattan, placed them in the vessel vertically and began to tap them with a stone . . . *tap! tap! tap!*

Well, this was a new one on me—as an American friend of mine used to say in Manila—and I was considerably astonished to find my pannikin half-full of a cool delicious drink which he had coaxed out of the cane. Apart from his services as a guide, our swarthy Philippino comrade seemed to be earning his wage as a purveyor of free refreshments.

Pushing on again, we began to receive our first preliminary taste of what was in store for us. The wind had veered, and Camiguin’s volcano sent us a pungent reek of its sulphurous fumes. And a little farther on, our footfalls began to make a new and strange sound as we walked—almost as if we were

treading the hollow parchment of a giant drum. I recognised it. I knew we were now walking over a thin "skin" of rock, which covers the internal fires whose flames had consumed the soil.

My Ilocanos, suddenly terrified by the odd drumming of their footsteps, set up a yell and nearly stampeded on the spot. I had a tough job pacifying them and, of course, I had to explain all about the fires below the thin and brittle rock upon which we stood.

"And if you dance about like that," I said, "*you'll damned-well go through!*"

That was enough. And it was no idle threat. It was true! Nor was it at all certain—though I did not tell my Ilocanos—that the rock "skin" would not give way under our weight, however lightly and carefully we trod. It was one of those risks that must be taken, sometimes. . . . Shaken to the marrow by my threatful warning, Messrs. Bartolomeo and Co. advanced with a mincing gait and haggard expression that might have sent me into fits of laughter if I had not been half-expecting to be precipitated, at any moment, into Camiguin's infernal regions.

I contributed to the very audible and collective sigh of relief that arose in the sulphurous air when we found our feet on solid rock once more. The country opened out here into an arid stretch of dead vegetation, culminating in a ridge which we crossed expectantly: and there at our feet was the lip of the crater, the very edge of the volcano.

And a truly fearsome sight it was !

From the cavernous bowl of the scorching crater, sable clouds of blinding smoke belched in our faces. Asphyxiating fumes poured from hundreds of sulphurevents in full blast.

The longer I looked at it, the less I liked it. My eyes stung. My throat was parched. As the sulphurous fumes reached my lungs I began to cough. And I began to do some hard thinking too. . . . What a fool I was ! Risking a long, expensive trip for a hopeless job like this ! How, on this earth, was a man to go down into an inferno like this ? . . . And all the time I was cogitating uneasily, there came up from the deeps a continuous and ominous rumbling, and the ground quivered beneath my feet.

I stole a look at the poor beggars I had persuaded to accompany me on this crazy adventure. Blank consternation was indelibly stamped on their drawn faces, and though I was far from happy myself, I had to grin—I am afraid I have a pernicious habit of seeing a funny side to everything. Bartolomeo, in a sepulchral voice, protested.

“ Don’t laugh, señor ! It is very dangerous——”

“ Not a bit of it ! ” I declared—and may I be forgiven for that awful lie ! “ Dangerous, Bartolomeo ? No, no ! It only *looks* dangerous.”

“ It looks like hell ! ” Bartolomeo commented with all the serious emphasis that he could command in that moment of dithering funk.

“ Nothing of the kind,” I said, and cleared my

throat and swallowed hard. "You'll see, when we get down. Come on! Where's that guide?"

The guide came forward, with an air of resignation.

And as we walked, very gingerly, around the smouldering rim of the crater to find foothold for a descent, I quickly discovered that our accomplished Philippino's virtues shone less brightly going down a volcano than when he was climbing up a tree. Although he led the way—and I was close behind him, ready to grab him if he tried to bolt—he proceeded with slow and solemn steps and an expression of profound melancholy, something like the chief mourner at a funeral. Slithering, stumbling, down we went—deeper and deeper, enveloped in sulphurous fumes, until my Ilocanos began to complain that the fiery heat of the earth was scorching the soles of their feet. Their complaint was genuine enough, and I said that everybody could return except Bartolomeo and the guide, to whom I had given *arpagattas* to protect their feet from the heat.

But only my big foreman remained. Our Philippino guide gave another astonishing display of his climbing abilities: he scooted up the slope of the crater like a mountain-goat. And even Bartolomeo argued persuasively that he was a married man with responsibilities to his wife and children. I have often met married men of rather casual habits who, in moments of personal peril, suddenly display a most unusual solicitude for their wives and children. . . . Bartolomeo pathetically asked me what would happen to his poor wife if he were killed? I

said I didn't know. But when I told him what would certainly happen to him if he didn't pull his socks up and stick to me, he nodded a rather sullen assent.

The others were looking down at us from the edge of the crater, and I know they must have thought I was stark, staring mad: but the force of personal example can work miracles. To my surprise and delight, two Ilocanos and the Philippino guide volunteered to come with us—when they realised that I was determined to carry on alone, if necessary. But the guide insisted that I must go first, while he directed me from the rear—a novel arrangement, which reminded me of Gilbert and Sullivan's Duke of Plaza Toro who, if I remember rightly,

*Led his Army from behind—
He found it less exciting.*

However, I led on and in a few moments we were lost to the sight of our friends who stayed behind. Fumes, smoke and steam enveloped us like a blanket, and I was walking "blind," wondering at every step if the thin crust of the earth might not break under me and fling me into a boiling mud-bath or a furnace of volcanic fire. I was getting badly scared when we reached the bed of the crater: it was quivering like the lid of a boiling kettle. The expansive pressure of the imprisoned gases and steam must be enormous. There are hundreds of vents, of course, which act as safety-valves. Some day, however, that "lid" will blow off, and when it does

there will almost certainly be a cataclysm—a tidal-wave that will wipe Aparri off the mainland.

The dense sulphur fumes—to my great surprise—actually had little ill-effect upon us, though at first they had seemed so deadly and suffocating. They were not nearly so overpowering as I expected them to be. The reek was most unpleasant, but it did not harm us in any way.

But the heat was terrible, and to add to my anxieties I began to fear that we might have a case of heat-apoplexy down there. . . . The bottom of the crater was about three hundred metres in length, scarred with enormous steaming fissures in the rock, and it was practically one huge bed of sulphur with a crystallised crust of bright yellow. I made a thorough examination of this, while my uneasy companions stood by, ready to bolt. Their eyes—which, like mine, were streaming with sulphuretted tears—bulged in terrified apprehension as I cut through the crust: heaven knows *what* they expected to jump out of it!

The hard crystallised layer was about three inches thick, and underneath I found a bed of soft powdered sulphur six feet deep. There were cones of volcanic mud, hardened on the outside, which contained a loathsome concoction of seething, boiling slime, which rose every few seconds with a horrible and almost-human cough and belching sound. I jumped backward hastily, expecting it to boil over: but, for some mysterious reason, it never did, it only heaved and subsided and heaved again. They looked like

devilish witches' cauldrons, and I noticed that Bartolomeo was staring at one of them with horrid fascination.

"Well, boy," I said, trying to be bright, "and what do you think of that?"

"Señor," Bartolomeo replied with a sombre look at that kettle of scalding muck, "I was thinking that would be a very good place to put —— in." He mentioned the name of a notorious money-lender of Ilocos Norte, and as I happened to know the scoundrel I felt inclined to agree.

Satisfied now with the result of my exploration—for I had a "find" of several thousands of tons of high-grade sulphur—I gave the word to ascend to the cool air of the plateau, and my companions did not stand upon the order of their going. Nor was I permitted to lead the way, this time: my Philippino guide of the prehensile toes made a splendid start and was first over the top—an easy first—almost before I had finished saying the word "Go!"

CHAPTER XX

BURIAL-GROUNDS OF THE LOST RACES OF CAMIGUIN

AS I clambered out of the crater I noticed on three spurs, or ridges, a number of mounds that looked very much like cairns : they were surrounded by a ring of boulders which had evidently been placed there to prevent the earthen mounds from being washed away by the typhoon rainstorms that are prevalent, at certain seasons of the year, in the Babuyan Channel. It seemed to me that here was one of the burial-grounds—of which I had often heard—of the long-lost races of Camiguin.

Thinking that I might unearth some interesting relics for the Manila Museum in Calle Anloague, I set my men to work stripping the soil and stones from a couple of mounds that seemed to be in fairly good condition. One of them presented a remarkable appearance. Evidently, a sulphur-vent had opened beneath it and, in the course of many years, gradually transformed it into what looked like one solid mass of sulphur. We were presently rewarded by the discovery of two huge urns—or cists—about four feet high, in each mound. On removing the

upper urn which covered the lower embedded one, I discovered human bones so calcined as to crumble at a touch ; and part of the remains had been transformed into a glowing mass of yellow flowers of sulphur of the most exquisite crystalline form.

The bones were those of a people of abnormal stature and peculiar characteristics. The skulls exhibited a low and receding forehead and the jaws were prognathous. The humerus-bones were very long, like the gorilla's, while the femurs were short. The teeth were perfect, but I noticed that the incisors were so smoothly rounded as to be hardly noticeable as such : this ancient race of Camiguin seem to have lived on a fruit and vegetable diet, and I think it probable that they were tree-dwellers.

The funeral-urns were made of some kind of earthenware, and the upper urn had a neck-opening for the head, the lower urn containing the trunk and limbs. But I discovered that the skull I was holding in my hand would not pass through the neck-opening. How had they managed to pass the upper urn over the dead man's head when they interred him ? It certainly would not go through that neck-hole ! It seemed a poser, and yet the explanation which eventually occurred to me is feasible and simple. I think that after the head had been passed through a sufficiently large opening, the space around the neck was filled in with damp clay which would quickly set in the hot volcanic ground. While I was thinking out this problem, the skull crumbled

to dust in my hands . . . and it was a very odd sensation. . . .

I replaced the humerus and femur very gently in the receptacle where they had probably rested for thousands of years, and turned to give an eye to my Ilocanos who were busy on another mound. I had seen Bartolomeo gazing at me, in undisguised alarm, when I had the skull in my hands : indeed, the sepulchral atmosphere seemed to be rather oppressive and spooky. With his pick, one of them accidentally chipped a small hole in the urn they were digging out.

With a sound like a poignant sigh—it was really terribly human—a nebulous column of vapour escaped and wafted heavenwards in the still hot air.

With staccato yells, my superstitious Ilocanos downed tools—like one man—and stampeded. . . . Long afterwards, when I had shocked him into a state of coherence, Bartolomeo took his wiggling stolidly, but he turned an obstinately deaf ear to all my scientific explanations of escaping vapours.

“Señor,” said he, “it *was* a Spirit !” And he glanced uneasily over his shoulder, in the deepening twilight, as if he expected to see another one at any moment—and worse than the last.

* * * * *

But in the broad daylight of the next morning, they seemed to have forgotten their scare and I set them to work on the mounds once more. I began to be so interested that I thought a really systematic search would give such interesting and

valuable data that it might well repay the cost of a special expedition. And once again we found an urn filled with the most beautifully-formed sulphur crystals. Never were the remains of mortal man revealed to human eyes in a more perfect form. We gathered round, reverently, and gazed at it without speaking.

In later explorations in Camiguin, I found numerous other craters—mostly extinct or dying—and in all of them were these weird tombs of the aboriginal inhabitants of this almost unknown island of the Pacific. And I have seen these cemeteries on the hill-sides and hill-tops. A notable one was sited on the top of a rise which was solely composed of volcanic ash. Building a road from the sulphur-deposits down to the coast, we dug through a section of this ridge to a depth of fifty feet without touching rock-bottom. Parts of the island were literally buried beneath volcanic ash, and it was during these eruptions of ages ago that the great cataclysm occurred which wiped out the prosperous people who, at one time, inhabited this uncanny spot.

Most of the urns were of an inferior quality of unglazed terra-cotta and very porous, but I found one which was highly-finished and evidently of Chinese or Japanese origin as the outside was embossed with the figure of the dragon: this discovery we made amid a group of massive cairns which was obviously the last resting-place of the chiefs or headmen. Indeed, I am inclined to think that these lost races of Camiguin were all of Chinese

extraction. Hundreds of years ago, when the great Chinese pirate Limajon vainly tried to conquer the Philippines, he made his headquarters in the hidden lagoon of Calayan, where his junks assembled for the invasion of Luzon. Limajon maintained a colony of Chinese munition-workers to make gunpowder from the sulphur-deposits of Camiguin.

I sat down by the crater and began to think about Limajon and these queer tombs . . . Chinese torture ?

I found much food for thought in the discoveries I had made, for it seemed to me that the crater of a volcano would surely be the last place on earth where one would choose to bury their dead. Then, with a sudden recollection of that neck-hole in the upper urns through which the head could not pass—like our ancient pillory—I remembered what fiends incarnate the Chinese are in inventing the most frightful tortures. Could it be that these people—victims of the Pirate-king's ferocity perhaps—had been buried alive and slowly roasted to death ?

The idea gripped my imagination. I pictured shrieking wretches being crammed into the lower urns, their heads protruding while the damp clay was packed around their necks and their living tomb was embedded in oven-like rock. I imagined their thin high screams of agony, as the glowing heat became intense, echoing in this wild and desolate spot. . . . Nor was this idea altogether fantastic. Chinese ingenuity, in inventing dreadful human torments, has gone farther than that. It

was credible—so much so that I almost began to feel that the beastly place was haunted.

In this pensive mood, I was lying in a narrow strip of shade on the crater's edge after our labours of a strenuous afternoon.

"Señor," enquired Bartolomeo—I had clean forgotten his existence in my reverie. "What are you thinking about?"

Like a fool, I told him.

For a few tense moments—certainly not longer—I had an audience of gaping Ilocanos.

And the next moment, I was alone.

Never again, after that, could I persuade an Ilocano to go with me to Camiguin.

* * * * *

In our camp, that night, I heard them discussing the matter in hushed undertones of superstitious awe.

It were easy to laugh at them. But, after all, who knows?

And it was one of those tropical nights in the wilds when the very silence speaks of mysteries and the silver magic of the moon, filtered by fragrant foliage, peoples the shadows beneath the trees with strange distorted shapes.

I lay in my old camp-bed, dreaming awake, and breathing the lily-scent of the dove-orchids which bloom at the full of the moon and die at dawn.

End of the Hunter's Story

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